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**Living with a Failed State: Somalia and the States of the
East African Regional Security Complex 2009-2011**

(Thesenblatt)

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Disputationskommission:

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1. Lebenslauf

Introduction

Somalia is a unique place, as it provides the researcher with plenty of material to study. While it has brought terrible suffering and unspeakable sorrow to its inhabitants, the on-and-off civil war that has raged in the country since 1991 presents also a rare opportunity to the interested: here, after all, is a country which has had no functioning government, army, police force, tax collection, football league or national broadcaster for twenty years. What are the reasons for this course of history? How do the Somalis cope with the failure of their state? What can policymakers do to help fix the situation and prevent other countries from taking the same route to state failure? Questions over questions, which all warrant further research.

The paper only attempts to examine a little part of the huge “Somalia picture”, namely the effects of state failure on its region. No conflict occurs in an empty space. External actors are invariably affected by any given conflict in their neighborhood, be it through refugee flows, disruption of economic networks and activity, arms trade or piracy. The external actors in the Somali conflict are, however, by no means only passive players. They try to minimize the negative effects coming out from Somalia, while at the same time actively influencing the situation inside the country according to their interests. It is this interaction between the states of the region and Somalia which we will try to analyze in the paper.

The object of investigation and key questions

The paper is a case study. It examines the relationship between a failed state (Somalia) and its surrounding region (consisting of the states Kenya, Ethiopia, Eritrea and Uganda) since early 2009. The starting points of the paper are the following questions: what is it like to live in close proximity to a failed state? How does a failed state like Somalia affect its surrounding region? It is fair to argue, that any failed state produces various effects (refugees, instability, disruption of economic networks etc.) which greatly influence the surrounding states. What are these effects, and are they negative (as one would assume) or, at least partly, positive for the surrounding states? Further, how does a given state respond to these effects? What is its strategy to minimize the threats and maximize the potential benefits? And finally: how do the states of the region try to influence the security and political situation in Somalia? In short, we are looking at the *interaction* between a failed state and its surrounding region over a given period of time.

Hypothesis

In the last decade, it has become commonplace to regard failed states as presenting one of the gravest dangers to world security. Conventional wisdom and common sense suggest, that it is highly disadvantageous for any state to live adjacent to, or in the neighborhood of, a failed state. While the negative effects of state failure are mostly borne by the local population, failed states supposedly also produce a variety of factors which might threaten neighboring states.

For starters, failed states might negatively affect the stability and security of the surrounding countries in the forms of refugee flows, cross-border clashes, or large-scale raids. As Liana Sun Wyler points out: “Instability has a tendency to spread beyond a weak state’s political borders, through overwhelming refugee flows, increased arms smuggling, breakdowns in regional trade, and many other ways.” Moreover, failed states might export home-grown terrorism to neighboring countries and might facilitate the activity of transnational crime. Whole regions can thus be contaminated by the failure of a state.

There are several examples for such a development. The civil wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone are an obvious case in point. In the 1990s rebels, weapons and money from conflict diamonds from Liberia poured across the border to neighboring Sierra Leone, Guinea and Cote d’Ivoire. In Sierra Leone, a long civil war broke out, leaving 50,000 dead, while the other two countries were also seriously destabilized (which, in the case of Cote d’Ivoire, led to yet another civil war). A similar development happened in the Great Lakes region of Central Africa, where the genocide in Rwanda destabilized the adjacent countries, leading to the two Congo wars which left approximately 3 million dead. These examples clearly show how state failure in one country can lead to the conflagration of the neighboring countries, if not the whole region. Therefore, *we postulate that living in the neighborhood of a failed state (in our case Somalia) is highly disadvantageous in terms of security and stability for the surrounding countries (in our case Kenya, Eritrea, Ethiopia and Uganda).*

Apart from matters of security and stability, failed states cause problems for neighboring countries in other ways as well. On the economic front, studies suggest that being „merely adjacent to what the World Bank calls a Low-Income Country Under Stress (LICUS) reduces a country’s annual growth by an average of 1.6 percent.” Other negative economic factors, as scholar Daniel Lambach points out, might include the flight of investors, rising transaction and infrastructure costs, tourists who stay away and increased military expenditure to avert the threats emanating from the failed state. Moreover, neighboring but stable states might be

utilized by warlords and shadowy entrepreneurs to import military equipment, export conflict goods and conduct financial transactions. Living with Somalia, we therefore postulate, adversely affects the economies of the neighboring states. The size and scale of the negative effects may of course vary from state to state. It seems obvious, for example, that states adjacent to Somalia suffer more in economic terms than states further away. Moreover, there also might be some positive effects emanating from Somalia: since 1991, many Somali businessmen have relocated to Nairobi, for example. But *we nevertheless presume that the economic costs for the states of the region caused by the state failure in Somalia hugely outweigh the benefits.*

Overall, therefore, it seems that living in the neighborhood of a failed state inflicts huge costs and offers few benefits for the surrounding states. If this analysis is right, this would suggest that it is of paramount importance for the states of the region to pacify their failed neighbor as soon as possible, in order to reduce the threats emanating from it. While it is clear that the goal of „bringing peace” to Somalia is distant and beyond the capabilities of a single state, it seems plausible that Kenya, Eritrea, Ethiopia and Kenya would work towards a lasting settlement in Somalia. *We therefore suppose that the four analyzed states are all interested in contributing to stabilize the situation in Somalia.*

But there is another side to the equation. The surrounding states are by no means only passive players. Theory suggests that countries neighboring a failed state react to threats as any other normal country would reasonably do: they try to minimize the mentioned negative effects while trying - to a varying degree - to influence the situation inside the country to their own advantage (Lambach calls this phenomenon „outside-in regionalization”, see later). *This „influencing” is, we postulate, driven by the interests of the surrounding states.*

While conceding that living with a failed state poses grave threats for the neighboring states, we also presume that they have learned how to handle the problems emanating from Somalia to their own best advantage. After all, they have had twenty years to learn to live side by side with Somalia. Assuming this, *we postulate that the states of the region have found a reasonable modus vivendi with Somalia, one in which they astutely minimize the threats and problems coming from Somalia while working to reap all the potential benefits.*

Methodology

The paper is a work of almost four years of constant research. Broadly speaking, during these years we have collected our information from five different sources. The first were press reports from a wide range of Somali, regional and international papers, news portals, agencies and blogs. These press reports were complemented by the high-quality reporting of two of the most important sources for Africa: Africa Confidential and Africa Research Bulletin. All these documents were compiled and analyzed on a weekly basis to gather the relevant informations about the relationship of Somalia and the surrounding states. All in all, we have compiled a database consisting of more than 3,000 articles ranging from early 2008 until May 2011.

The second source of information were papers, reports and briefings from a wide range of think-tanks and NGOs. These include, just to name a few, the International Crisis Group, Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, papers from Chatham House, the Council on Foreign Relations, Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, the South African Institute for Security Studies and several others. These sources of information were complemented by articles in peer-reviewed journals, such as Foreign Affairs, Current History, African Affairs and the like.

The third source of information were official documents from international organizations and national governments. The most important of these was the set of reports written by the United Nations Monitoring Group on Somalia since 2003. These twelve reports formed the backbone of this paper. They were complemented by other UN documents (such as the reports of the Secretary General on Somalia), and by documents of the European Union, the African Union, and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD). Among the governmental sources, the documents of the US State Department proved to be highly valuable, especially the Country Reports on Terrorism.

The fourth source of information were monographs and edited volumes on Somalia in particular, and East Africa in general. Given that the events analyzed in this paper are relatively recent, these sources served as a background for this paper, rather than a prime source of up-to-date information. Still, several authors were crucial for our understanding of the Somali and East African issues, chief among them I.M.Lewis, Kenneth Menkhaus, Gérard Prunier, Volker Matthies, Peter D. Little, Richard Reid, Dan Connell, Sally Healy, Michael A.

Weinstein, Abdi Ismail Samatar, Gaim Kibreab, Harold G. Marcus, Michela Wrong and Christopher Clapham, just to name a few.

Finally, the fifth source of information were more than 30 background interviews with middle- and high-ranking diplomats, journalists, conflict analysts and scholars conducted between June 2010-January 2011. These interviews were partly personal (conducted during a six-week research trip to East Africa in Kampala, Nairobi and Mombasa) and partly electronic, via email or Skype. All interviews were conducted on a confidential basis, so that the names of the interview partners will not be given in the paper, only their views reflected.

After all the relevant and acquirable informations were gathered, we arranged them chronologically on a state-by-state basis. The resulting data sets comprised around 1,000 pages in total. After this, we filtered the data sets for the most relevant pieces of information and summed them up in the states chapter (see Chapter 4). In order to confront the reader with a paper that is manageable in length, we obviously had to select very strictly. However, we believe that the most relevant informations we have gathered over the years are present in the paper.

Resume

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Grants and Fellowships

2008-2011 Grant of the Hungarian State for Ph.D students, 12,500 €
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Publications

Entries in Reference Works

- *The Conflict between Eritrea and Djibouti*, In: Conflict Barometer 2009, Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research
- *The Conflict between Somaliland and Puntland*, In: Conflict Barometer 2008, Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research

Articles (selection)

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Conference presentations

- **Living with a failed state: Somalia and its neighbors**, Magyar Külügyi Intézet – Kávé és Külpolitika, 2011. március 24.
- **Sudan: after elections, before separation?**, Magyar Külügyi Intézet – Kávé és Külpolitika, 2010. június 24.
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