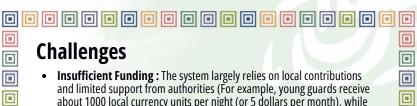# SOMALILAND
A HYBRID STATE AT THE CROSSROADS OF TRADITION AND MODERNITY

Challenges

- **Insufficient Funding :** The system largely relies on local contributions and limited support from authorities (For example, young guards receive about 1000 local currency units per night (or 5 dollars per month), while other actors receive little to no remuneration.)

- **Limited Infrastructure and Human Resources :** Inadequate offices, poor road conditions, and a lack of communication equipment affect the system's effectiveness. The lack of training for informal actors and the difficulties integrating new police commanders further aggravate the situation.

- **Lack of International Recognition:** As Somaliland is not officially recognized, it faces obstacles in attracting investments and international support programs.

Future Prospects

- **Maintaining Local Legitimacy :** The strong local adherence to this hybrid system demonstrates remarkable resilience and adaptability.

- **Potential Evolution :** If Somaliland were to gain international recognition, the system would need to adapt to incorporate external funding without losing its participatory and decentralized character.

Traditional Institutions

Central Role of Clan Elders and Councils:

Historically responsible for conflict resolution, these traditional actors are now integrated into the political system.

The Guurti, representing the upper chamber of Parliament, embodies this blend of tradition and modernity by maintaining a mediating and advisory role on security and legislative issues.

Modern institutions

Inspired by Western models, state structures include a presidency and a bicameral parliament. These institutions provide legitimacy and stability to the government while engaging in dialogue with traditional actors.

Informal Security Mechanism

- Local Coordination : A security director (male) and his deputy (female) ensure the link between communities and the police.
- Local teams (35-45 members per district):

-**Clan elders and chiefs**: Monitor the community, mediate conflicts (family, land disputes), and intervene to report issues.

-**Women and youth**: Act as neighbourhood sentinels, reporting any anomalies (suspicious new residents, family disputes, incidents of theft or assault).
Sheikhs : Through mosques, promote peace and manage conflicts via Islamic justice.

Interface with Formal Security

- Close collaboration with the Police : Alerts from the informal network (via directors or directly from citizens) enable rapid intervention by law enforcement.
- Weekly meetings between informal actors and police representatives ensure ongoing updates and effective follow-up on field information.
- Communication channels (phones, radios, neighbourhood meeting) enhance coordination and responsiveness to incidents.

Somaliland is an example of an emerging state grounded in a hybrid political order. The state of Somalia collapsed after the downfall of the regime of Siad Barre in 1991. Somaliland seceded from and emerged with an internally negotiated new constitution under which it has been stably governed since. Hence, Somaliland is often seen as providing a success story. The success of peace building and 'state-building' in Somaliland is to a large extent due to the involvement of traditional actors and customary institutions that are rooted in the traditional clan-based Somali society.

Institutional organisation

Clan elders and their councils were the decisive actors in the peace building process, utilizing customary forms and mechanisms of conflict resolution. Today they are constitutionally embedded in the political system of Somaliland which combines customary institutions and modern state institutions modeled along the lines of western statehood, such as a parliament and a president.

In particular, Somaliland non state actors have a house of representatives - the Guurti - working alongside the state authorities to influence the state decision-making process and policy implementation. The "Guurti," is the upper house of a bicameral parliament[i] where elders' roles are enshrined. The Guurti formerly belonged to the informal governance actors between 1993 and 1997 (during the charter period). From 1997 to date - the constitutional period, the powers of the elders were transferred to assist the state security. The Guurti mediates between the government and the community; plays a role in reconciliatory matters within the tribes, politicians; amends the laws passed by the House of Representatives; and initiates the laws of security, culture and religion[ii]. There are also actors who belong to both the informal and formal group. These are community members like the clan elders and the chiefs who are registered at the ministry of interior and defense as per their clans of origin.

Peace and state-building have invariably emerged from down-ward upward approach rather than being imposed through a top-down process and, unusually, have taken place in the absence of a central monopoly of violence by the government. Indeed, security in Somaliland is dealt within a decentralized manner and is largely guaranteed by local politicians and elders. The result is an indigenous type of statehood that amalgamates customary, Islamic and statutory

norms and practices. The institutions vary from the grassroots level to the senior most government institutions.

Informal Security Institutions and their role with the Formal Security Institutions of the State

In Somaliland, the roles of the informal and formal security governance are embedded within each other. Somaliland's informal security governance is composed of different members with distinct roles :

- The informal group of security governance is headed by a security director; usually a male, deputized by a female : they have a secretary, always male. The directors of informal security coordinate security issues linking the community to the state security. They have their offices located in each and every district headquarters of the community they serve. They coordinate the district security issues with the chairpersons of the districts who are representatives of the local government, then they communicate information to the police. In the local government, there is the municipal council security director who is accountable for the directors of the informal security group.

- Other members include the clan elders, the youths, women, chiefs and the sheikhs. This team is usually found in all the districts of Somaliland consisting of 35-45 members. The major role they play is to provide security protection to the community through vigilant security surveillance; inform the police about security threats like youth fighting, drugs, alcohol issues. More specifically, responsibility are shared as follows:

  o The elders and chiefs make follow ups with the police and identify criminals ; moderate in cases like family, land disputes; the elders take role in dialogue or conflict resolution. They sit in the traditional courts while clan chiefs mediate in land disputes; both of them also identify abandoned children, report to the police and assists in adoption issues ; help the

  poor by collecting donations from the able people especially during Ramadan and distribute to them ;

  o The women, just like other team members, are volunteers of informal security governance and play very important role in security surveillance. They, together with the children, always notice any stranger in their neighbourhood and report immediately any suspected strangers occupying a new house or any residential premises. They also report family disputes, rape cases and theft. Depending on the case, they report to the community elders, the informal security director and, if there is emergency security threat, they call the police;

  o The youths, especially men, normally work as guards providing security to different homes at night. They always work in a group of four guarding 100 homes within an estate and give patrol within their work environment. They have a director of security within themselves and an office within their locality. They coordinate issues of security with the clan elders within their community. They give security briefs to their leaders every morning and report empty houses; they know every occupant of every house in their areas of jurisdiction. In case of any emergency, theft or threats, they communicate with the police directly. Some other youths are also absorbed within business premises where they maintain the security surveillance and give feedback to their directors.

  o Sheikhs, like other team members, coordinate security issues within the community and advocate for peace during their delivery in the mosques. They resolve disputes taken to Sharia courts. They provide religious guidance to the community members in terms of peace building through Islamic policies.

Somaliland's hybrid security governance deploys great range of networking. The police and the informal security team represent the highest networking team. To strengthen its security, each and every district has one or two police stations and two Criminal Investigation Departments (CID). The district security team always holds a meeting once every week for security updates and maps a way forward for the following weeks. In the issues of crime, the security coordination is always from the society members through their security director or straight to the police in case of emergency. They always work as a team.

The informal members are not armed and have no authority to enter anyone's home or apprehend anyone. Rather, they report to the police. The police would collect the criminal to the police cells where other procedures would be followed to the courts depending on the crime. Non-state security actors have no direct control over them, except the informal director and his deputy who work under the control of the director of security in the municipal council; other non-state security actors are volunteers, control themselves; security surveillance is their responsibility; they have our own rules to follow. However, if they prove irresponsible in their community, other volunteers will be selected. But there is no direct link between the judiciary and the informal.

According to a field survey led by the SIA, Somaliand political hybrid system, in particular in the security realm, enjoys high levels of legitimacy in the eyes of the people. The majority of the respondents recognize the informal security governance as the most reliable security system, followed by formal. Since Somalilanders are Allah fearing people, some of them have faith in their God to directly insure security protection. In 1991, before the fall of Siad Bare, there were 11 mosques in Hargeisa city, most of them referring to the Sufi tradition. By 2016, mosques in Somaliland's capital number up to 1000: only 2 of them referring to the Sufi tradition, the rest adhering to the wahabi odedience.

Challenges

Challenges in this security system cannot go unmentioned. Chief amongst them is inadequate finances affecting both the formal and informal actors. This contributes to poor infrastructure including lack of adequate offices for operation, poor and inadequate roads for both actors among others. Hybrid security governance of Somaliland mainly relies on a financial support provision from the government. The informal security team are volunteers who obtain no financial support from any source, except their security directors and the deputy who are paid by the local government. The youth guards collect their contributions of 1000 Somali currency from each and every home every night or $5per month. The clan elders and the chiefs often obtain little contributions in appreciation from the two parties involved in disputes during conflict resolution. Society members have to solicit for their own money for transport to report and attend security meetings and buy air time and phones to communicate the insecurity threats.

Furthermore, Somaliland is not internationally recognized. This further contributes to lack of bilateral recognition by neighbouring countries,[iii] lack of investment programs by outside investors and lack of proper international donors support.

Other challenges include improper documentations for follow-ups, lack of capacity building across both levels. Informal security actors have no proper trainings in security management. On the other hand, the new police commanders within the police stations in the districts further pose a working relationship challenge because they are usually uncooperative with the informal security team when they are not yet familiar with them. Inadequate police officers further worsen the situation because there are delays or sometimes failure in reporting to the scene of crime.

Finally, the main security backbone of Somaliland is the society members who are purely volunteers in security surveillance. Though for many years the informal security sector has been strong and maintained its security, voluntarism might not be sustainable forever.

More generally, the voluntary character of the Somaliland hybrid security system would be very difficult to maintain if the country was granted international recognition and received international financial support.

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The African Security Sector Network (ASSN) signed a Memorandum of Grant Conditions in 2014 with the International Development and Research Centre of Canada (IDRC) for the execution of a three year research project titled "Hybrid Security Governance in Africa: Implications for State building". This project investigates the complex amalgam of statutory and non statutory actors and institutions typically at play in the African security sector. Its central thesis is that, in the African context, security sectors are often constituted and driven by multilevel norms, structures and networks that span the conventional state / non state divide. It covers six African countries: Cote d'Ivoire, Liberia, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Somaliland and South Africa.

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[i] There is an elected House of Representatives as well.
[ii] It is feared that this transfer of power in the long run will weaken the strength of the Guurti to criticize the state.
[iii] However, security issues in Somaliland can sometimes be coordinated with the neighbouring countries that provide intelligence security advice beyond its borders.

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The HSGO analysis does not commit IDRC.

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