



Theory and Practice of Statebuilding



GUEST LECTURE

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What is the State?

In each society, the state has different levels of penetration

Outside the state, people live in self-governance. This is usually based on tradition.

So the state (governance from above, and from outside) is the contrary of self-governance.

The state is a form of government over a people which emerged 5,000 years ago in Mesopotamia and Egypt. Before that people lived without states.

For a long time the state was the property of the King, who owned all the lands and the people living on them, often in the name of God(s). This is the patrimonial state, or the **kingdom**.

The state was improved by the Greeks and Romans 2,500 to 2,000 years ago. They created the '**republic**' where the state belongs not to the ruler, but to the people. This state had democratic institutions (the Senate).

The form of republic, where the state belongs to the people, emerged in Europe again in the Renaissance (16th century). After the French and American revolutions (late 18th century) the republican state became the **modern form of government**, and finally it imposed itself in the Western world in the 19th and 20th centuries.

⇒ Europe has developed its states over many centuries of public pressure to democratize government.

⇒ In the rest of the world kingdoms or other forms of patrimonial state remained the most common until the 20th century



Thomas Hobbes 'Leviathan' 1651



Goya 'Colossus' 1808-12

What is the International State Order?

All states are equal, but the international state order is not democratic.

There are strong / core states which set the rules of the game, and weak states in the periphery which must play by those rules.

The International State Order was created in 1648 in Westphalia, at the end of a 30-years war between European nations.

It was decided that states are like people: they have rights and obligations, and relations between each other. All states are in principle equal.

Relations between states are governed by treaty. The international state order is based on law.

After the second world war, with the creation of the United Nations, and with the decolonization that produced more than a hundred new states, a rules-based state order became essential.

Until the fall of communism, there were several competing international state orders; but since 1991 there is only one. It is very quickly becoming more integrated, rules-based and complex. Trade agreements, climate change and sustainable development goals, financial regulation, copyright laws, global security arrangements and more make it very demanding to be a state today!

⇒ There is only one model of state possible: liberal democratic

⇒ Statehood and sovereignty are conferred by other states, not by the people; see the example of Somaliland



Why does the international community support state-building?

Modern European states were built by their populations, against their kings. This was largely a bottom-up process.

Statebuilding today is a top-down process. Populations are asked to agree through elections, but they have no role in creating the state.

Statebuilding interventions are a new concept

When there were competing state orders (e.g. in the Cold War) states sought allies, and they would give those allies the means to be stronger (weapons or financial transfers) but not intervene in their state. The concept of **sovereignty** prevailed.

In the run-up to decolonization the idea to teach countries how to **govern** themselves became current. Different French and British approaches in Africa, and UN Trusteeship period in Somalia.

Using the mechanism of debt the Western world (IMF and World Bank) forced the developing world to restructure their states in the 1980s, and align to Western interests through structural adjustment policies, thus giving global capital and financial power (based in West) free rein.

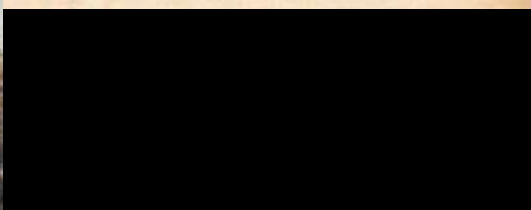
In the 1990s statebuilding became a humanitarian necessity; statebuilding for **development**

After 9/11, when the War on Terror started, statebuilding became a **security** necessity. States must achieve the *monopoly of violence*.

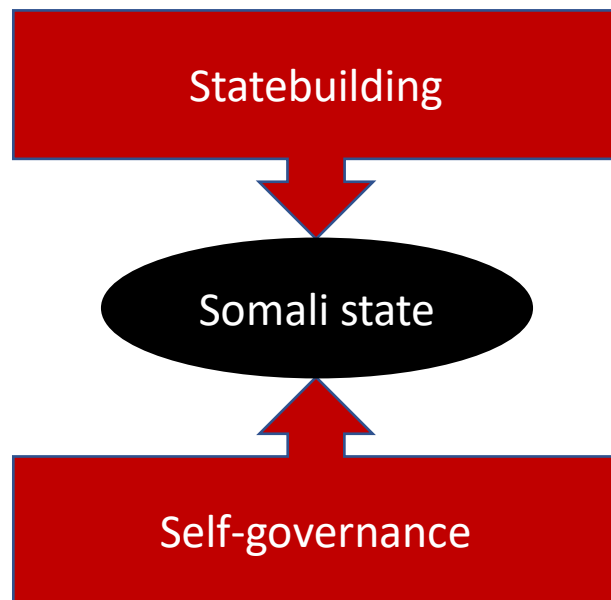
⇒ Today, statebuilding is supposed to achieve all this: local development and governance, Western hegemony and security and maintaining the sovereignty of the intervened-in state....



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Statebuilding in Somalia



Somalia is traditionally a self-governed country. Somali pastoralists are nomadic and nomads have always been against states (their borders, rules and taxation). Clans have their own kings. *Xeer* is the basis of self-governance. Among adult men, Somali culture is democratic.

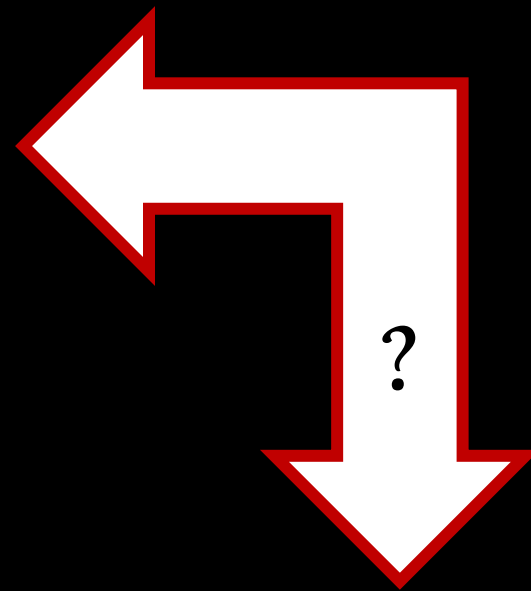
State penetration has never been very deep in Somalia, even when the state was strong (Siad Barre). When the state collapsed, Somalis returned to self-governance. GDP growth without a state. *Nabadoon*.

Somalis need a state. Why? Because you cannot live in isolation. A state is necessary to interact with the rest of the world. To provide passports, international recognition and do business. There are also many inequalities in traditional governance which make it unacceptable for young Somalis.

But the state is designed by the international community for its own benefit, not for the benefit of Somali people and their culture.

⇒ Discussion on issues such as the power of the central government relative to the autonomy of member states, elections, replacing clan authorities with police and judges. Without discussion you will get a new police state which does not act in the people's interest.

⇒ Self-governance is not always 'traditional'. It can also evolve as the minds of the people evolve.



*Somali Society
must have this
discussion*

