

Social Contracts and Security in Conflict States: The Democratic Republic of Congo, Sierra Leone and Somalia

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The work of Hobbes on the social contract is frequently cited by those contemplating the reconstruction of order in conflict states. We present field work from the Democratic Republic of Congo, Sierra Leone and Somalia to show that assumptions derived from the classical social contract theorists frequently lead the international community astray as it attempts to rebuild these African states. First, the social contract is not between the state and individuals but is instead with communities. Second, there are four contracts to consider instead of the one of classical presumptions – (i) community governance structures with local families; (ii) the regime with the military; (iii) regime and military as the state with community governance systems; and (iv) the state with the international community. Third, the military is frequently a source of predation on communities rather than of protection. And fourth, the dynamics of these contracts can be in conflict with one another.