

## **Africa's New Social Spaces as a Challenge for Conventional Peace-building Approaches and Development Policy Strategies? The EU Commission in Somalia, Somaliland and Puntland**

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Positions and strategies of the international state system towards Africa's conflict regions are mostly based on a liberal and/ or realistic world view. The international engagement towards the Horn of Africa respectively towards Somalia, Somaliland and Puntland has thereby (as in other African cases) adhered to a policy of re-building central state structures promoting the idea of peace-building through state-building. Attempted conflict resolution in Somalia led to a multitude of failed peace agreements.

Looking at the EU Commission as a supranational actor in development policy it is observable that a kind of conceptual transformation in their policy strategies took place regarding the notion of (broken) state and societal structures. There seems to be a raising awareness of local and informal structures and actors and their developmental impact.

But how far do these new perspectives actually reach? What spatial references are made? Concerning those, how have the strategies towards this region been modified during the past 20 years?

Even in consideration of new perspectives in EU-Documents the assumption of this paper regarding Somalia, Somaliland and Puntland is: While the official longterm goal (in spite of a certain opening of the debate) still is the re-building of a homogenous Somali state in the borders of 1991, an undermining of the principle of state sovereignty has possibly to be recognized on a level of daily pragmatism. Cooperating with actors and authorities who are officially not existent because internationally not recognised and supporting them financially, like the EU does in the northern part of former Somalia, demonstrates a break with the established treatment of this region. Should Somalia, Somaliland and Puntland be realized as a level existing quite permanently in parallel to the international system of states (and no longer as a failing state which is to be fixed) the international law principle of territorial de jure sovereignty will be effectively questioned.

This paper analyzes the reaction of the EU Commission on the breaking apart of the Somali state, conventionally taken as a failed state, and on the emergence of new social spaces and asks for potential shifts in the perception of this region. A change in perspective (even when at first deriving from an adaptation to needs and challenges in the field) would mean a challenge to international law that

indicates a shift in norm and raises major questions to the future of the international state system and its legal order.