



State Failure and Local Governance in Afghanistan and Somalia/Somaliland

By means of qualitatively orientated field studies, this comparative research project examines local and national governance structures in two regions of Afghanistan (Kunduz and Paktia) and Somaliland (Awdal and Sanaag) respectively.

The project aims at contributing to the understanding of the local, regional and national formation of governance structures after states collapse. From a basic research perspective, the primary interest is in the social processes driving the “survival” and reconfiguration of former state institutions and traditional authorities, the sub-ordination and transformation of powerful actors of violence (warlords, militia, former government army), and the dynamics of governance structures emerging in the virtual or effective absence of a state. More specifically, the goal is to explain the patterns of interaction between these diverse and partly competing actors both from within the governance structure and its social and institutional embeddedness.

The study intends to provide policy advice on the functional logic of governance structures, including the differences between their localised realities. This goal will also be advanced by developing an applicable analysis framework for such governance structures, ultimately assisting in the identification of potential project partners and entry points for external interventions.

Security Governance

In times of state failure, collapsing state authority is superseded by a multitude of actors who take over security and organisational functions. Emerging institutional networks are generally characterised by a hybrid nature, an overlapping of traditional or religious institutions, remnants of state facilities and new social entities that are often based on violence.



The spectrum of power and authority relations is redefined, ranging from arbitrary violence and the pathogenic collapse of social contexts (social anomie) to the re-establishment of reliable security institutions.

Under what conditions are emerging structures on the local level relatively stable or unstable? What roles do the strength of the central government and its relations to local/regional leaders play?



Political and Administrative Governance

In all four local research areas, a vast number of actors exercise political and administrative functions. Their interplay, however, is characterised by very different relations within the respective local or regional sub-state entities as well as in relation to the national center of power. The resulting forms of political authority range from extensive fragmentation to forms



of oligopolies, and from horizontal, consensus-based to vertical, authoritatively enforced structures. Administrative functions remain weak in all cases. How can the respective types of actors be classified? Who is recognised as a potential guarantors of conflict management, the central state or local leaders? Under what conditions can decentralised structures be conducive to the (re)constitution of collective statehood?



Socio-Economic Governance

In both countries, economic interests and political power are closely connected, albeit on different terms. In Somaliland, economic power tends to translate into political influence, which can in turn advance business interests, yet these spheres are relatively distinct. After decades of war and the experience of state collapse, the Afghan civil war economy can hardly be distinguished



from the remaining economy. Key actors (army/militia leaders, local “big men”, businessmen etc.) are generally involved in both segments.

Against this background, the project analyses how existing governance structures materially reproduce themselves, what approaches there are to transform, “legalise” or substitute illegal economic activities, and how a reliable resource base can be achieved in the longer run.



The Role of External Actors

In view of regional and international interventions, state failure has led to forms of cooperation, coexistence and competition between external and domestic actors which have never been as intensive before. The tools of global governance often prove inadequate as external actors are insufficiently familiar with the realities at the interface with local and national actors. Under conditions of state failure,



and following state collapse, regional and international actors cannot avoid the set of de facto entities that substitute functions of the former state, or even seek to replace it. External powers support such actors in attending to state tasks, or even adopt these functions themselves. There obviously is no panacea in dealing with these manifold structures, the project thus draws the lessons from past experiences and reflects them on their context.

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Further information: www.state-failure.de