AMISOM and the regional construction of a failed state in Somalia

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SOMALIA AND ITS NEIGHBOURS:

AMISOM AND THE REGIONAL CONSTRUCTION OF A

FAILED STATE

ABSTRACT

Somalia, for many analysts, is the paradigmatic 'failed state', as well as the site of numerous external interventions since 1991. Where early interventions were designed and directed by international actors, however, more recent peace operations have been led by regional states. The current AU Mission in Somalia, AMISOM, has been presented by its supporters and financiers as a novel 'African solution' to a putative 'African problem'. This article seeks to challenge analyses of AMISOM, and other African peace operations, which contrast 'international' approaches with 'local' or 'African' approaches, focusing instead on the region as a unit of analysis. In doing so, the study uses archival and interview data to interrogate how regional politico-military elites have viewed Somalia, their role within it and the kind of political authority they have wished to see established there since the genesis of AMISOM. The article finds that regional elites have sought to use AMISOM to impose a particular version of statehood on Somalia, based in both neo-Weberian institutionalist theory and their own domestic political experiences. This has entailed not only the rejection of central manifestations of Somali political authority but also the regional construction of Somalia itself as a failed state.

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IN MARCH 2017, UGANDAN PRESIDENT YOWERI MUSEVENI lauded the successes of his country's peacekeeping efforts in Somalia at another international conference on the conflict-affected country. 'We were confident…of the correctness and feasibility of our decision [to intervene as part of the AU Mission in Somalia (AMISOM)]', he declared, adding that 'This was due to our knowledge of the African peoples'.[1]

Indeed, the value of African-led peace operations – the number of which has grown dramatically over the last decade - has been increasingly rationalized and justified by African government officials in these terms. African states and militaries, their leaders often suggest, understand the needs and local contexts of other African states far better than those intervening from beyond the continent and, consequently, can use this knowledge to help rebuild locally-legitimate and functional polities. [2] AMISOM, which during its lifetime has been wholly commanded by regional[3] military officials and come to incorporate troops from five East African states, is currently the largest

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[1] State House Uganda, 'President Museveni's Statement at a Conference on Somalia, London', 11 May 2017, *The State House of Uganda* website,

<http://www.statehouse.go.ug/media/speeches/2017/05/11/president-musevenis-statement-conference-somalia-london> (20 March 2018).

[2] Danielle Beswick, 'Peacekeeping, regime security and 'African solutions to African problems': Exploring motivations for Rwanda's involvement in Darfur', *Third World Quarterly* 31, 5 (2010), pp.739-754; Paul D Williams, 'Keeping the peace in Africa: Why "African" solutions are not enough', *Ethics and International Affairs* 22, 3 (2008), pp.309-329.

[3] 'Region', 'regional' and 'neighbours' in this article should be understood as encompassing member states of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD; Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, Sudan, South Sudan and Uganda).

and, arguably, the most prominent such operation.[4] It has also been hailed by one of its leading funders – the United States (US) – as 'a model…for stabilizing the region'[5] and by another – the United Nations (UN) - as an 'African success' and 'the real achievement of African solidarity and what the African spirit of sacrifice can bring'.[6]

To what extent, though, has the mission represented a different approach to (re-) building conflict-affected states to recent forms of intervention led by powers outside Africa? Such interventions, usually spearheaded by the UN during the 1990s and 2000s, have been heavily criticized by scholars and, increasingly, practitioners for imposing near-identical, externally-designed governance institutions on quite different societies, as well as for disregarding the role of existing, indigenous forms of political authority.[7] In the case of the contemporary Somali territories, the incorporation of clan lineage elders into Somaliland's House of Elders since 1991

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[4] AMISOM, 'AMISOM Military Component', AMISOM website, no date, < http://amisom-au.org/mission-profile/military-component/ > (20 March 2018).

[5] White House, Office of the Press Secretary, 'Remarks by President Obama and Prime Minister Hailemariam of Ethiopia in joint press conference', Obama White House website, 27 July 2015, < https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2015/07/27/remarks-president-obama-and-prime-minister-hailemariam-desalegn-ethiopia/ > (20 March 2018).

[6] AMISOM, 'Africa's success story is intertwined with Somalia, says AU Special Envoy to Somalia', May 2015, < http://amisom-au.org/2015/05/africas-success-story-is-intertwined-with-somalia-says-au-special-envoy-to-somalia/ > (20 March 2018).

[7] Severine Autesserre, 'Dangerous tales: Dominant narratives on the Congo and their unintended consequences', *African Affairs* 111, 443 (2012), pp.202-222; David Chandler, *International statebuilding: The rise of post-liberal governance* (London, Routledge, 2010); Nicolas Lemay-Hébert, 'The "empty-shell" approach: The setup process of international administrations in Timor-Leste and Kosovo, its consequences and lessons', *International Studies Perspectives* 12, 2 (2011), pp.190-211.

represents one such indigenous model of political authority, developed in the absence of international intervention.[8] The polity briefly established in south/central Somalia by the Islamic Courts Union (ICU) in 2006 (see below) represents another, whether or not one sympathises with its goals or approaches. In November 2014, the then head of AMISOM wrote that 'AMISOM's success shows Africa's solution is working'[9] – but what can be said to be distinctively 'African' about regional views on resolving the purported Somalia crisis?

This article argues that AMISOM's 'solution' has not been informed by local, Somali perspectives or a common 'African solidarity' *per se* but, instead, by externally-derived archetypes of stability, fragility and statehood envisaged by the elites of intervening regional states. Though these archetypes differ according to the historical experience of the intervening state, they nonetheless share, and blend, two core assumptions. First, that all states are defined by the possession of formal, bureaucratic institutions largely autonomous of societal forces, and of a security force which can enforce those institutions' will across the territory they claim to rule. The collapse or absence of these institutions, according to this analysis, is a defining symptom of 'state failure' and a trigger for external intervention aimed at rebuilding the formal mechanisms of statehood.

This technocratic, institutionalist understanding of statehood and state failure – sometimes characterized by scholars as 'neo-Weberian' (see below) - derives

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[8] Mark Bradbury, *Becoming Somaliland* (Oxford, James Currey, 2008), pp.96-98.

[9] Maman S Sidikou, 'Amisom's success shows Africa's solution is working', *Daily Monitor* (Kampala), 20 November 2014.

primarily from Eurocentric statebuilding frameworks internalized by the region's politico-security networks through a range of processes, particularly in response to international agendas on countering Islamic terrorism. This assumption nonetheless interacts with another far more longstanding one, whereby regional states understand statehood in Somalia through the lens of their own historical trajectories of state formation and regime maintenance . Both assumptions depict Somalia as a 'problem' for the region and both base themselves in externalized epistemologies of statehood and state reconstruction.

In making these arguments, the article contributes to, and advances, broader academic debates on international intervention and state fragility in Africa. Policy-focused political science scholarship has tended to focus on conceptualizing, measuring and classifying degrees of state integrity or fragility. More critical scholars have challenged the assumptions and recommendations of this literature, emphasizing the importance of locally-owned approaches to governance – but focusing primarily on the approaches of international actors, particularly the UN and US. The conceptual contribution of this study is therefore to problematize the frequently-made distinctions between 'international' and 'local' in both literatures and to re-focus scholarly attention on the region as unit of analysis.

The study also presents an innovative lens through which to examine Africa's international relations. It does this by exploring regional security politics through

tracing the discursive construction of regional norms.[10] In doing so, the study does not seek to argue that regional approaches to statebuilding and intervention via AMISOM are conceptually distinct in Africa, even if their empirical and contextual contours are. The AMISOM and Somalia case, rather, stands as perhaps the most prominent counter to continental and international assertions that African regional peacekeeping and statebuilding operations are founded primarily in - amorphous - notions of African solidarity and an enhanced neighbourly sympathy for locally-legitimate approaches to organizing political authority.

Following a brief discussion of methodology, the article begins with an examination of the multi-faceted literature on international intervention and state fragility. In doing so, it highlights the limited focus placed on the region and on regionally-led peacekeeping processes, despite their prominence in Africa. The study then introduces the Somalia case and delineates how regional actors' discourses, interventions and approaches – via AMISOM - have constructed Somalia as a 'failed state' requiring the imposition of a particular model of externally-designed state apparatus. The article argues, however, that these perspectives are not purely examples of African deference to Eurocentric intellectual frameworks, but, rather, are also derived from a regional political economy where neighbouring states have long sought to supervise and tame a country considered to require regional 'babysitting'[11].

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[10] 'Norm' in this article refers to a 'standard of appropriate behaviour for actors with a given identity' (Martha Finnemore and Kathryn Sikkink, 'International norm dynamics and political change', *World Politics* 52, 4 (1998), p.891).

[11] Interview with William Ruto, deputy president of Kenya, on *Big Question*, *Citizen TV*, Kenya, 1 July 2014.

Researching regional relations: Methods, data and scope

This article focuses on explaining regional state actors' understandings of regional statebuilding in Somalia through, and in the context of, the AMISOM operation. It looks primarily, therefore, at the period since the mission's genesis – which can be found in 2005.[12] It focuses particularly, however, on the years 2007-2014, during which time most states in the region came to transform their formerly semi-independent approaches to state-building in Somalia into formal membership of AMISOM, Uganda joining the mission in 2007, Djibouti in 2011, Kenya in 2012 and Ethiopia in 2013. The broader history of regional engagement with, and involvement in, Somalia has nevertheless long informed the thinking and behaviour of many regional players and is discussed, briefly, in the second half of the article. Similarly, while the author recognizes the significance of Somalia's sustained relationships with non-African international actors for many of the issues discussed in this study, this is not the focus of the article.[13]

Methodologically, the study is principally concerned with uncovering how regional AMISOM troop-contributing state actors (specifically Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda[14]) have conceived of the statebuilding project in Somalia – what they have

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[12] Jonathan Fisher, 'Managing donor perceptions: Contextualizing Uganda's 2007 intervention in Somalia', *African Affairs* 111, 444 (2012), pp.421-422.

[13] See Christopher Clapham, *Africa in the international system: The politics of state survival* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp.134-149; Ken Menkhaus, 'They created a desert and called it peace (building)', *Review of African Political Economy* 36, 120 (2009), pp.223-233.

[14] Burundi is not included given its limited involvement in the regional politics of the Greater Horn of Africa outside AMISOM and absence from IGAD.

considered to be a desirable form of political authority in the country, what they believe their role should be in fostering such authority and what ideas and factors have lain behind these perspectives. In doing so, it seeks to contribute to broader conceptual and empirical debates on: 1) the role of regional actors in international intervention, and in framing state fragility and reconstruction in Africa; and 2) on the nature of contemporary African international relations. The choice of Somalia, and AMISOM, reflects the pre-eminent position of Somalia in academic and policy literature on conceptualisations of 'state failure' (see below).

Evidence used to answer the article's core questions is identified through examining regional actors' articulations of their views of, and visions for, Somalia. Understanding the character of international relations to be socially constructed, the study places emphasis on how ideas on state failure and the role of regional actors shape, determine and – often – are used to justify particular actions. This is a common approach taken in scholarly critiques of international interventions but not, to date, of regionally-led operations. The article does not claim to provide a comprehensive exploration of the perspectives of each of the four regional AMISOM contributors considered and instead focus is placed on examining politico-military elites from these states as an epistemic community, at least in relation to statebuilding in Somalia.[15]

To do so, the article analyses actor statements and narratives produced in contexts where key regional exchanges on Somalia have taken place and where regional

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[15] Peter M Haas, 'Introduction: Epistemic communities and international policy coordination', *International Organization* 46, 1 (1992), pp.1-35.

perspectives are negotiated and consolidated. Particularly central are transcripts of high-level regional meetings and summits held between 2004-2011 under the aegis of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and accessed during a visit to IGAD's paper archives during May 2014. Fifteen documents relating to Somalia were reviewed, with five directly cited below.

Seventeen author interviews with IGAD officials and Djiboutian, Ethiopian, Kenyan and Ugandan officials are also made use of (drawn from a broader collection of over 100). These interviews have been undertaken across a range of fieldwork trips to Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda between 2013 and 2017. In most cases, interviewees asked that they not be identified by name or office and only a selection of interviews are cited. The analysis and argument is also informed by the author's participation in two regional dialogue fora hosted by the *Friedrich Ebert Stiftung* in Nairobi during 2014-2015.[16]

'Failed states', regional intervention and Somalia

The 'failed state' concept entered scholarly and policy discourses during the mid-1990s and has since become a widely-acknowledged – albeit contested - 'category' of

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[16] The *Friedrich Ebert Stiftung* is a German political foundation. Its annual Greater Horn of Africa Dialogue brings together regional and international political, military and civil society stakeholders as a means to 'facilitate political dialogue on [regional] security threats and…national, regional and continental responses (Antonia Witt, *10th FES annual conference: Peace and security in the Horn of Africa* (*Friedrich Ebert Stiftung*, Addis Ababa, 2014), p. 5).

state for many academics and practitioners.[17] Qualified by, and in competition with, a range of other terms, the 'failed state' is generally agreed by scholars who favour the term to be the end point at which political, social, economic and security institutions disintegrate, sometimes simultaneously.[18]

Contributors to this literature have focused not only on 'diagnosing' state failure but also on prescribing cures, even adopting in some cases, in the words of Nicolas Lemay-Hébert, 'diagnostic medical analog [ies] to exemplify how we should be able to forecast state failure'.[19] This reflects not only the heavy policy focus of much of this school of thought but also its conviction that functioning political authorities possess core characteristics which can – and should – be replicated to restore order and predictability in conflict and post-conflict situations.

This literature draws heavily on the writings of German sociologist Max Weber (1864-1920) and his characterization of the state as a 'compulsory political association…[whose] administrative staff successfully upholds the claim to the

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[17] Sonja Grimm, Nicolas Lemay-Hébert and Olivier Nay, "Fragile states": Introducing a political concept', *Third World Quarterly* 35, 2 (2014), pp.197-209.

[18] Robert Rotberg, *When states fail: Causes and consequences* (Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ, 2003), pp.1-25.

[19] Nicolas Lemay-Hebert, 'Rethinking Weberian approaches to statebuilding', in David Chandler and Timothy Sisk (eds), *Routledge Handbook of International Statebuilding* (Routledge, London, 2013), p.6. Prominent examples include Ashraf Ghani and Clare Lockhart, *Fixing failed states: A framework for rebuilding a fractured world* (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2008); Gerald Helman and Steve Ratner, 'Saving failed states', *Foreign Policy* 89 (1992-1993) and Rotberg, *When states fail*.

monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force in the enforcement of its order'.[20] This approach to understanding political authority has focused on ascribing stability and statehood to formal institutional bodies that maintain a 'monopoly of violence' across a particular territory, through armed forces of various kinds but also governance mechanisms, including judicial and bureaucratic systems.[21] It has also understood the state as largely autonomous of society, adopting a universalistic understanding of what paradigmatic statehood looks like, in spite of the early-twentieth century European context in which Weber's ideas were developed.[22] Indeed, scholars contest the degree to which Weber's writings edify the narrow definition of statehood outlined above and, hence, scholars who ascribe to it are increasingly referred to as 'neo-Weberian' theorists, to reflect this interpretational ambiguity. [23] According to this analysis, the state is composed of legal-rational office-holders and the bulk of UN and other peacekeeping missions since the 1990s have been informed by a similar logic: that functioning states require particular governance structures and machineries, whose basic shape and logic can be effectively replicated across contexts.[24]

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[20] Max Weber, *Economy and society, part 1 and 2*, translated by Günther Roth and Claus Wittich (University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, California, 1978), p.54.

[21] Joel Migdal, *Strong societies and weak states: State-society relations and state capabilities in the Third World* (Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ, 1988); Charles Tilly, *Coercion, capital and European states, AD 990-1990* (Blackwell, Oxford, 1990).

[22] Michael Mann, *States, war and capitalism* (Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1988).

[23] Philipp Lotthoz and Nicolas Lemay-Hébert, 'Re-reading Weber, re-conceptualizing state-building: From neo-Weberian to post-Weberian approaches to state, legitimacy and state-building', *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 29, 4 (2016), pp.1467-1485.

[24] Roland Paris, *At war's end: Building peace after civil conflict* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2004).

Many of the most expansive these missions came into being in the years following the Cold War, when notions of global democratic victory persuaded designers of peace operations that successful post-conflict statebuilding could be secured through transplanting institutions focused around a liberal democratic political order and a liberal market-based economic order, seemingly without regard for existing systems of political authority in intervention sites.[25] African states have featured prominently in academic and policy discussions of state failure and liberal interventionism. Somalia, in particular, invariably appears near the top of state failure indices and has long been regarded by 'problem solver' commentators such as Robert Rotberg and Eben Kaplan as the 'model of a collapsed state....the classical failed...state'[26] and the 'very definition of a failed state'.[27]

Critically for this study, however, such perspectives have often been internalised and developed by African political and intellectual elites themselves. In 1995, influential Kenyan scholar Ali Mazrui delineated six 'basic functions of the state' in an article on 'the failed state' in Africa, drawing heavily upon neo-Weberian frameworks to argue that 'it is clear that many [African] states are in trouble'.[28] More recently, the African Development Bank's Fragile States Facility (now Transition Support Facility) has

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[25] Oliver Richmond, 'The problem of peace: Understanding the 'liberal peace', *Conflict, Security and Development* 6, 3 (2006), pp.291-314.

[26] Robert Rotberg, 'Failed states in a world of terror', *Foreign Affairs* 81, 4 (2002), pp.127-140.

[27] Eben Kaplan, *Somalia's terrorist infestation* (Council on Foreign Relations, Washington DC, 2006); Rotberg, *When states fail*, pp.11-12.

[28] Ali Mazrui, 'The blood of experience: The failed state and political collapse in Africa', *World Policy Journal* 12 (1995), p.28.

produced framing documents which defer to how 'most development agencies broadly describe fragile states' – a description which focuses on 'state institutions' - in their explorations of the concept.[29]

Tracing the wider diffusion, embedding and contestation of such ideas among African elites is outside the scope of this article. It is nonetheless important to recognise the significance of the Global War on Terror for understanding how neo-Weberian portrayals of state integrity have gained salience in east Africa. Many of the region's key aid donors – notably the US, UK and European Union (EU) – have calibrated their relationships with east African states around countering Islamic extremism and denying 'safe haven' to Islamist terrorists since 9/11 especially.[30] This has compelled the region's politico-military networks, many of whose operations depend on Western financial and military support, to engage with underlying donor policy assumptions around state failure and the place of political Islam within regional politics. This has not been a unidirectional process by any means[31], but has nonetheless provided a critical regional meeting place for debates on, and articulations of, state fragility and the shape of 'acceptable' political authority. This has had important implications for regional approaches to statebuilding in Somalia, as detailed below.

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[29] Mthuli Ncube and Basil Jones, *Drivers and dynamics of fragility in Africa*, Chief Economist Complex, Africa Economic Brief 4, 5 (African Development Bank, Abidjan, 2013), p.1.

[30] Jonathan Fisher and David M Anderson, 'Authoritarianism and the securitisation of development in Africa', *International Affairs* 91, 1 (2015), pp.131-151.

[31] Jonathan Fisher, 'When it pays to be a fragile state': Uganda's use and abuse of a dubious concept', *Third World Quarterly* 35, 2 (2014), pp.316-332.

These neo-Weberian perspectives have been assailed from multiple directions. Africanist scholars have long questioned even the *ability* of some African states to project power beyond urban centres.[32] More recent discussions on 'hinterland state failure' and 'security pluralism' take this debate further by highlighting when African states *choose* not to project or sustain state control in and over certain parts of their claimed territories for reasons of pragmatism, strategy and regime maintenance.[33] External impositions of one-size-fits-all state architectures have also been criticized as inappropriate, including in studies of Somalia, where alternative forms of political authority, such as Somalia's ICU, have been recognised or where localised manifestations of political order have been contrasted with poorly-functioning but internationally-recognised state institutions.[34] Literature on the Somaliland state is particularly pertinent in this regard.[35] Moreover, scholars have increasingly sought to

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[32] Jeffrey Herbst, *States and power in Africa: Comparative lessons in authority and control* (Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ, 2000).

[33] Ken Menkhaus, 'State failure and ungoverned space', in IISS (ed), *Ending Wars, Consolidating Peace: Economic Perspectives*', (IISS, London, 2008), pp.171-188; Mareike Schomerus and Lotje de Vries, 'Improvising border security: 'A situation of security pluralism' along South Sudan's borders', *Security Dialogue*, 45, 3 (June 2014), pp.279-294.

[34] Tobias Hagmann and Markus Hoehne, 'Failures of the state failure debate: Evidence from the Somali territories', *Journal of International Development* 21, 1 (2009), pp.42-57; Ken Menkhaus, 'State failure, state-building, and prospects for a 'functional failed state' in Somalia', *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 656, 1 (2014), pp.154-172.

[35] Bradbury, *Becoming Somaliland*; Hagmann and Hoehne, 'Failures of the state failure debate'; Sarah Phillips, 'When less was more: External assistance and the political settlement in Somaliland', *International Affairs* 92, 3 (2016), pp.629-645.

reframe debates around power and statehood in parts of Africa through highlighting the heterarchous nature of political authority in many settings.[36]

This chimes with the work of critical peace studies scholars who have critiqued UN peacekeeping and peacebuilding missions for reifying the transplanting of a particular type of governance architecture and ignoring locally-legitimate forms of political organisation in designing 'one-size-fits-all' interventions.[37] These approaches, argues Lemay-Hébert, have involved the imposition of alien, 'empty shell' state architectures on top of extant, vibrant political orders leading to dysfunction, consternation and failure.[38] To date, however, both sides of the debate have tended towards contrasting 'international' practices and perceptions with those of the 'local'.[39] Regional missions, such as AMISOM, have often been conceptualized as proxies for the international system in this regard, with the distinctive role and place of the region being overlooked.

This study locates itself within this conceptual gap, focusing on how regions construct and conceptualise state failure, and how best to respond to it. For, since the establishment of the AU in 2002, peacekeeping and peacebuilding has become an

[36] Alice Bellagamba and Georg Klute (eds), *Beside the state – emergent powers in contemporary Africa* (Rüdiger Köpper, Cologne, 2008).

[37] Lemay-Hébert, 'The 'empty shell' approach', Roger Mac Ginty, *International peacebuilding and local resistance: Hybrid forms of peace* (Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, 2011).

[38] Lemay-Hébert, 'The 'empty shell approach'.

[39] Severine Autesserre, *The trouble with Congo: Local violence and the failure of international peacebuilding* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2010); Ghani and Lockhart, *Fixing Failed States*; Menkhaus, 'State failure'; Richmond, *A post-liberal peace*.

increasingly regionalized affair in Africa, even if operations have continued to be funded largely by states outside the continent. The AU has established peacekeeping missions in Burundi, Sudan, Darfur, Somalia, Central Africa, Mali and Central African Republic since 2003 while regional bodies formerly with little involvement in security affairs have created standby forces and brigades to respond to regional crises.[40] Most of these missions are led by neighbours of the state being intervened in and most have been justified by the intervening states – and Western aid donors - in terms of providing 'African solutions to African problems', a concept first developed by US officials as a means to justify withdrawal of American troops from regional conflict theatres but since appropriated, and instrumentalized, by African political elites as a rallying cry for African unity, agency and self-help.[41]

Understanding the contemporary dynamics of statebuilding, in/security and international relations in African conflict spaces therefore necessitates a reconsideration of the role of regional states, particularly through the mechanism of regional peacekeeping, and a focus on what is often an analytical 'missing middle' between international and (notionally) African or local perspectives. The remainder of this article will provide this focus through exploring regional approaches to statebuilding in Somalia, via AMISOM, following a brief overview of the mission's provenance, evolution and context.

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[40] Paul D Williams and Arthur Boutellis, 'Partnership peacekeeping: Challenges and opportunities in the United Nations-African Union relationship', *African Affairs* 113, 451 (2014), pp.254-278.

[41] Danielle Beswick, 'Peacekeeping, regime security and 'African solutions to African problems'; Ricardo Soares de Oliveira and Harry Verhoeven, 'Taming intervention: Sovereignty, statehood and political order in Africa', *Survival* 60, 2 (2018), pp.7-32; Williams, 'Keeping the peace in Africa'.

The regime of Somalia's Siad Barre – in power since October 1969 – collapsed in January 1991. The steady removal of political and economic opportunities from stakeholders and clans outside the president's own clan base during the 1980s is widely regarded as being the key mobilizer of multiple rebellions that eventually led to the longstanding Somali leader's downfall. This situation was exacerbated by a sudden loss in international support for Barre between 1989-1991 as Somalia's Cold War strategic value quickly evaporated.[42]

Since this time, Somalia has been governed by multiple political authorities. While the northern territories of Somaliland and Puntland – which *de facto* seceded from the rest of the country in 1991 and 1998 respectively – have seen a re-establishment and consolidation of political order, the rest of Somalia, often referred to as 'south/central Somalia' and the focus of AMISOM and this article, has not. Aside from a brief period of months in 2006 when the ICU held sway over much of the region, south/central Somalia has been divided-up between numerous, competing political authorities. These include: warlords and political factions with varying links to the former national army and the US Central Intelligence Agency; Islamist courts and militant groups (among the latter, *Al-Shabaab* being the most notable); the internationally-recognised Transitional National Government (2000-2004), Transitional Federal Government (TFG, 2004-2012) and Federal Government of

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[42] Abdi Ismail Samatar, 'Destruction of state and society in Somalia: Beyond the tribal convention', *Journal of Modern African Studies* 30, 4 (1992), pp.625-641; IM Lewis, *Understanding Somalia and Somaliland: Culture, history and society* (Hurst, London, 2008).

Somalia (FGS, since 2012) and regional armed forces. This proliferation of actors has led to widespread instability and insecurity for many Somalis and has encouraged regional and international states to intervene in support of – or opposition to – specific parties. This has occurred against the backdrop of the Global War on Terror and overriding international, and particularly US, UK and EU, concerns about Islamist activities in Somalia, and their connection to global Islamist networks.[43] The emergence of AMISOM – funded since its creation largely by the US, EU, UK and UN - should be seen within this regional and international context.

Regional involvement in Somalia since the mid-1990s has followed two paths – military intervention and diplomatic mediation. Though Ethiopia and Uganda have been more prominent in pursuing the former approach and Kenya and Djibouti the latter there has been some blurring of the lines in recent years, and a movement towards wholesale military intervention and peacekeeping. Ethiopia lead early mediation efforts between warring Somali factions during the 1990s but already had concerns about the emergence of fundamentalist Islamist groups in Somalia with ties to Ethiopian Ogadeni insurgents. This prompted, in 1996, the first of many *ad hoc* Ethiopian military interventions - designed to destroy Islamist militant bases and bolster Somali warlords who opposed them.[44] Since 2000, and the conclusion of war between Ethiopia and Eritrea, Addis Ababa has also been keen to prevent Somalia from becoming an additional front in its cold war with Asmara.[45]

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[43] Fisher and Anderson, 'Authoritarianism and the securitization of development'; Mohamed Ibrahim, 'Somalia and global terrorism: A growing connection?', *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 28, 3 (2010), pp. 283-295.

[44] Patrick Gilkes, 'Briefing: Somalia', *African Affairs* 98, 393 (1999), pp.571-577.

[45] Interview with senior Ethiopian foreign ministry official, Addis Ababa, 14 September 2017.

The most ambitious and sustained Ethiopian military intervention in Somalia came in December 2006, when Ethiopia dispatched up to 30,000 troops into Somalia to wrest control of Mogadishu from the ICU. Originating as a group of loosely-connected *sharia* courts, the ICU had gained authority in much of Mogadishu by 2006 as providers of justice and some basic services. [46] After a short period of tension, Ethiopian forces entered Somalia and retook Mogadishu in the name of Somalia's weak TFG. Working with Uganda, and with strong US and UK backing, they helped establish, in early 2007, a regional-led intervention force which could 'take over' the role of propping-up the TFG, which lacked any security capacity of its own. [47]

AMISOM – which also worked in tandem with Ethiopian troops until the latter's amalgamation into the operation in 2014 – has operated with considerable success in urban areas. It has not been the ICU which AMISOM and its allies have fought against for most of this time, however, but a far more militant off-shoot of the Union, *Al-Shabaab*. Outside of towns, *Al-Shabaab* remains AMISOM and the SFG's primary adversary and, indeed, the major power in many rural areas of southern Somalia, their influence and ability to mobilize buoyed by AMISOM's unpopularity. [48] The

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[46] Cedric Barnes and Harun Hassan, 'The rise and fall of Mogadishu's Islamic Courts', *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, 1, 2 (2007), pp.151-160.

[47] Fisher, 'Managing donor perceptions'.

[48] For more on *Al-Shabaab* see David M Anderson and Jacob McKnight, 'Kenya at war: Al-Shabaab and its enemies in Eastern Africa', *African Affairs*, 114, 454 (January 2015), pp.1-27; Stig Jaarle Hansen, *Al-Shabaab in Somalia: The history and ideology of a militant Islamist group, 2005-2012* (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2012); Ibrahim, 'A growing connection?'; Deborah Valentina

mission's heavy focus on counter-insurgency for much of its lifetime has led leading specialists such as Paul D Williams to conceptualise it as a counter-insurgency or, at best, a 'peace operation' rather than a peacekeeping operation.[49]

For Djibouti and Kenya, the facilitation of peace conferences had been the preferred vehicle for dealing with the Somali crisis until the later 2000s.[50] Investing significant diplomatic capital and resources in these processes, Kenya facilitated the election and emergence of the Somali TFG and parliament in 2004 and hosted the TFG and its institutions until their 2006 move to Somalia itself. Between 2008-2009, Djibouti hosted UN-led negotiations on the evolving composition of the TFG leadership. Nairobi continues to host those diplomatic missions and aid agencies accredited to but unable, or unwilling, to relocate permanently to Mogadishu.

The rise of *Al-Shabaab* during the later 2000s reinvigorated longstanding concerns in Nairobi on the security threat posed to Kenya by Islamists in Somalia, particularly following kidnapping incidents in northern Kenya in autumn 2011. In October 2011, Kenya took the unprecedented step of intervening militarily in Somalia in an effort to crush *Al-Shabaab* and there they remain today, albeit 're-hatted' as part of AMISOM in 2012.[51] Where Ugandan AMISOM troops have focused primarily on shoring-up

Melito, 'Building terror while fighting enemies: How the Global War on Terror deepened the crisis in Somalia', *Third World Quarterly* 36, 10 (2015), 1-21.

[49] Walter Lotze and Paul D Williams, *The surge to stabilize: Lessons for the UN from the AU's experience in Somalia* (International Peace Institute, New York, NY, 2016).

[50] Kidist Mulugeta, *The role of regional and international organizations in resolving the Somali conflict: The case of IGAD* (*Friedrich Ebert Stiftung*, Addis Ababa, 2009).

[51] Anderson and McKnight, 'Kenya at war'.

the TFG (and later SFG) in Mogadishu, Kenyan forces have instead remained around the border region between Kenya and Somalia where they have played a significant role in shaping local politics. Djibouti also joined the mission in 2011.

In recent years, then, while Somalia has remained a hotspot of conflicting regional agendas and interests, regional actors have aligned more around a single instrument to reconstructing the Somali state than at any time since the fall of Siad Barre. Through AMISOM, all of the country's immediate neighbours, together with Uganda, Burundi and Sierra Leone, have troops on the ground and all remain theoretically committed to strengthening the SFG polity. It was not, however, inevitable that regional actors would come together around such an approach, nor that they would identify their role as being to support and undergird a set of formal political institutions devised outside Somalia. The remainder of this study explains how regional states came to discursively construct Somalia as a 'failed state' requiring outside intervention and the establishment of a particular kind of neo-Weberian political order.

AMISOM and the region I: Constructing a 'weak, fragile and failed state'

East African political leaders have, understandably, often forcefully rejected the imposition of state fragility labels onto their own polities by international actors and institutions. They have not, however, balked at applying such labels to Somalia in recent years. Ugandan officials have been particularly prominent in this regard. In seeking to persuade parliamentarians to vote in support of Uganda contributing troops to AMISOM in February 2007, defence minister Crispus Kiyonga argued that

'Somalia has been a failed sister African state for nearly 16 years'.[52] Later that year, foreign minister Sam Kuteesa privately justified Uganda's involvement in Somalia to Eritrean president Isaias Afwerki by arguing that 'Uganda [like Somalia] was once a failed state that needed its neighbours' help'.[53] In a March 2008 conference of regional ministers in Kampala, Ugandan president Museveni opened the meeting by highlighting the importance of joint operations in states such as Somalia as a means to ward off 'the dangers of weak, fragile and failed states' while in September 2010 Kuteesa told a Kampala newspaper that Ugandan intervention in Somalia had been premised on 'mak [ing] sure there is no failed state [in the region].[54]

Somalia's immediate neighbours have been less prepared to present Somalia as 'failed' *per se*, but have frequently characterized the polity and their involvement therein using similar language and sentiments. In May 2013, at an international summit on Somalia attended by regional counterparts, Djiboutian president Ismael Guelleh characterized Somalia's recent past as a period of 'conflict, political dissensions, warlordism, extremism, piracy'.[55] A year later, this was echoed by a

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[52] Parliament of Uganda proceedings, *Hansard*, 13 February 2007.

[53] US Embassy Kampala diplomatic cable leaked by *Wikileaks*, 'Uganda: Official discussions with Eritrea on Somalia', 20 April 2007, < https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/07KAMPALA669_a.html > (20 March 2018).

[54] Report of the 3rd extra-ordinary meeting of defence and security ministers of IGAD, Kampala, 12 March 2008 (IGAD Secretariat Archives, 12 May 2014); Shifa Mwesigye, 'INTERVIEW: People will get rid of Museveni – Kutesa', *Observer* (Kampala), 1 September 2010.

[55] Speech by Ismael Guelleh, President of Djibouti, Somalia Conference, London, 7 May 2013, < https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tt3750-Zn8A > (20 March 2018).

Djiboutian official based at IGAD, who argued that 'this place Somalia, it has been a place of chaos for so long…it is somewhere there has been no government'.[56]

In Kenya, then president Mwai Kibaki highlighted the 'lawlessness' in contemporary Somalia to attendees at a 2011 state dinner and the 'fragile' situation in the country before assembled counterparts at the UN in 2008[57], while Kenyan deputy president William Ruto lamented to viewers of Kenya's *Citizen TV* in July 2014 that Kenya had been 'babysitting the situation in Kenya for 30 years'.[58] Kibaki's successor, Uhuru Kenyatta, told CNN in October 2015 that 'you know, we had a failed state right next to our border, a state where there was no rule of law, there was no government, and it was just open vast land'.[59] This followed a 2014 editorial in Kenya's *Daily Nation* authored by Kenyatta which highlighted the threat to Kenya from Somalia's purportedly ungoverned spaces.[60] In Ethiopia, foreign minister Seyoum Mesfin noted in a 2007 media interview that 'Somalia was a failed state for the last 15-16 years…Somalia is a country that has failed'.[61] A decade later, one of his chief aides

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[56] Interview, senior IGAD official, Djibouti, 13 May 2014.

[57] Kevin Kelley, 'Country back on track, Kibaki tells UN', *Daily Nation* (Nairobi), 24 September 2008; *Daily Nation* (Nairobi), 'Kibaki: Somalia instability a concern', 1 April 2011.

[58] *Citizen TV*, 'Big Question', 01/07/14

[59] *CNN Press Room*, 'President Kenyatta on gay rights in Kenya', Full interview transcript, 18 October 2015, < http://cnnpressroom.blogs.cnn.com/2015/10/18/president-kenyatta-on-gay-rights-in-kenya/ > (20 March 2018).

[60] Uhuru Kenyatta, 'Our country and our people are under attack; it is a war we must win together', *Daily Nation* (Nairobi), 2 December 2014.

[61] Robert Wiren, 'Interview: Seyoum Mesfin', *Les nouvelles d'Addis*, 12 December 2007, < http://www.ethiomedia.com/access/interview_seyoum_mesfin.html > (20 March 2018).

discussed with this author Ethiopia's historical attempt to 'come up with a cure' for Somalia's 'failure to function'.[62]

The argument here is not that regional characterisations of the Somali polity are normatively problematic or inaccurate as such. Nor is it that we should be surprised that the leaders of states whose citizens have died in terrorist attacks perpetrated by *Al-Shabaab* have framed Somalia in terms of instability, unpredictability and fragility. The point, rather, is that in presenting their view of Somalia to domestic, regional and international audiences, East African governments have reified strong/fragile state dichotomies and discourses of diagnosing and measuring state failure. Critically, this portrayal of Somalia as failed has been interlaced with, and has undergirded, regional discourses justifying regional interference, both political and military. Scholars have critiqued the international community's use of such rhetorical sleights of hand but not, to date, that of regional actors.[63]

One central discourse in this regard has focused around the threat posed to neighbours by a lawless Somalia. One senior figure from a regional state argued to counterparts in a roundtable discussion in Nairobi in 2015 that 'if Somalia is not at peace, Kenya cannot be at peace, Sudan cannot, Ethiopia cannot' while a senior IGAD Peace and Security official noted in a May 2014 interview that 'conflict in the region is

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[62] Interview with senior Ethiopian foreign ministry official, Addis Ababa, 14 September 2017.

[63] Menkhaus, 'They created a desert', 'State failure'.

intertwined and goes beyond national frontiers; with the Somali conflict the peace of Ethiopia, Kenya and Djibouti is affected'.[64]

This notion of Somali insecurity as a regional cause for concern has nonetheless been incorporated into a wider East African elite narrative around regional obligations and, indeed, as an instrument to bring regional actors together around a common foreign policy initiative. In a 2004 meeting of east African ministers in Kigali, IGAD executive-secretary Attalla Bashir told assembled figures that 'the region should see [the] Somalia [crisis] as a unique opportunity to play a pivotal role…to create strong and viable security structures in the region'.[65] In October 2008 his successor, Mahboub Maalim, told regional foreign ministers that 'full deployment of AMISOM is a condition that is absolutely necessary to save Somalia'.[66] Previously, in March 2006, Museveni had chided regional counterparts for inaction in the country: 'a lack of cooperation among the states of the region turns small problems into big problems'.[67] These sentiments have often been framed in terms of moral obligation to intervene following the 1994 Rwandan genocide but have rarely been accompanied by reflection on, or consideration of, the agency or opinions of Somali actors themselves.

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[64] Comments by senior figure from an East African state, Horn of Africa Dialogue Form, Nairobi, Kenya, 3 November 2015; Interview, senior IGAD Peace and Security official, Djibouti, Djibouti, 13 May 2014.

[65] Report of meeting of East African ministers of defence and security, Kigali, 9-10 September 2004 (IGAD Secretariat Archives, 13 May 2014).

[66] Report of extraordinary meeting of the IGAD Council of Ministers, Nairobi, 28 October 2010.

[67] Proceedings of the 11th summit of the assembly of heads of state and government of IGAD, Nairobi, 20 March 2006 (IGAD Secretariat Archives, 12 May 2014).

Regional characterisations of Somali state integrity – and regional obligations therein – have rested to a considerable degree on internalized neo-Weberian institutionalist frameworks and discourses. The development of this regional consensus around militarily resolving the Somali 'problem', however, also rests on a second, more longstanding regional portrayal of the Somali polity – and Somalis themselves – as a threat to the postcolonial regional order requiring containment. The Somali people of the Horn share a common language, culture, religion and adherence to a common system of customary law but were divided after the 1880s between five separate administrations, including three European colonial powers. In the complex, protracted and multi-layered negotiations leading to the creation of contemporary Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia, however, the cause of a unified Somali nation was ultimately subordinated to a range of other concerns and interests.[68].

This existential mismatch between Somali nationhood and statehood has presented a challenge to Nairobi and Addis Ababa in particular, since successive Somali administrations have supported irredentist Somali insurgencies in their borderlands – resulting, often, in major crackdowns.[69] Somalia's 1977 invasion of Ethiopia's Ogaden region to 'reclaim' Somali-inhabited territories helped cement, in the words of one longstanding Ethiopian foreign ministry official, the notion that 'Somalia was

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[68] Daniel Branch, 'Violence, decolonization and the Cold War in Kenya's north-eastern province, 1963-1978', *Journal of Eastern African Studies* 8, 4 (2014), pp.642-657.

[69] David M Anderson, 'Remembering Wagalla: State violence in northern Kenya, 1962-1991', *Journal of Eastern African Studies* 8, 4 (2014), pp.658-676.

the enemy, Somalia has always wanted to undermine Ethiopia'.[70] Regional constructions of Somalia's 'lawlessness' spilling-over borders therefore is based not only in internalized neo-Weberian models but also on a more enduring regional portrayal of Somalia as an existential threat to established, postcolonial statehood. The same is true for the development of a regional consensus around intervening in Somalia.

AMISOM and the region II: Constructing 'the very essence of statehood'

In delineating the kind of state they wish to see established, or re-constituted, in Somalia via AMISOM, regional actors have also demonstrated limited interest in building-on existing forms of authority or on local, Somali preferences. Instead, the imposition of a particular idea of what a state is has been a core concern – this idea largely resembling the model of statehood outlined by neo-Weberian theorists above. At the heart of the AMISOM Somali state envisaged has been the army and security services – convened, assembled and trained by regional forces, often outside Somalia.

Ethiopian and Ugandan officials in particular have viewed the 'building of a Somali army' as central to the reconstituted Somali state, with Museveni describing a professionalized, national army as 'one of the most important pillars of the state' at a 2013 IGAD summit.[71] This focus also became one of the central issues exercising

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[70] Interview with former senior Ethiopian foreign ministry official, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 14 September 2017.

[71] *New Vision* (Kampala), 'Professionalise Somali army – Museveni', 4 May 2013; Interviews with UK, EU, Ethiopian, Kenyan and Ugandan officials, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, May 2013 and April 2016 and Nairobi, Kenya, November 2014 and June 2016.

regional actors in advance of major international conferences in London in 2013 and 2017.[72] The establishment and consolidation of new, formal political institutions: an executive, a parliament, regional administrations and district administrations have also been viewed as critical foundations of 'civil authority' by regional powers.[73] In October 2008, Kenyan foreign affairs minister Moses Wetangula summarized the region's perspective on what this state should look like before regional counterparts, arguing that:

> We must devise an expert-informed collective approach to Somalia, otherwise it
> will be business as usual. We should refocus support to the Transitional Federal
> Institutions which are the very essence of statehood.[74]

This focus on building formal institutions was further fleshed-out by Ethiopian and Ugandan officials in interviews in 2013, when this author was informed that regional statebuilding priorities in Somalia were focusing around 'building the capacity of the Somali security services, particularly command and control structures'.[75] These structures do not appear, however, to have been designed to complement or align with existing manifestations of political authority in Somalia or to contribute to the negotiation of a social contract to undergird the nascent AMISOM state.[76] As Williams has noted, 'AMISOM…remains a predominantly military operation' with

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[72] Ibid

[73] Fred Oluoch, 'Kenya is not acting at the behest of US!', *Daily Nation* (Nairobi), 9 January 2007.

[74] Report of the 29th assembly of the council of ministers, Nairobi, 28 October 2008.

[75] Interview, senior Ethiopian diplomat, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 3 May 2013.

[76] Alice Hills, 'Somalia works: Police development as state building', *African Affairs* 113, 450 (2014), pp.88-107.

limited capacity or interest in moving from offense and defence to 'stabilization tasks'.[77] Indeed, for some regional officials interviewed for this study there was a sense that regional actors understand better what kind of political setup Somalia requires than Somalis themselves. One regional diplomat posted to Addis Ababa noted, for example, that 'Somalis are still patients in an intensive care unit…you can't expect them to know about governance yet'.[78]

This imagining of statehood as first-and-foremost defined by the establishment of a strong, disciplined army is clearly based in neo-Weberian statebuilding frameworks. It also, however, constitutes neighbouring regimes' seamless transference of their own approaches to post-conflict reconstruction to the Somali context. The current Ethiopian and Ugandan governing elites, for example, emerged from guerrilla liberation movements whose approach to statebuilding domestically has been founded around military logics and the armed forces as an ideological vanguard.[79] As in other post-liberation polities, this body is envisaged as a transformative institution tasked not only with defence and security but also economic governance, norm development and service provision.[80] Neither Addis Ababa nor Kampala appear to have considered whether this model of military-first statehood is appropriate to the quite different Somali context. One senior Ugandan, and AU, official noted in July 2017, for example, that Uganda 'had come with a medicine based on the experience of

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[77] Paul Williams, 'After Westgate: Opportunities and challenges in the war against Al-Shabaab' *International Affairs* 90, 4 (2014), pp.916-917.

[78] Interview, senior Ugandan military official, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 1 May 2013.

[79] Risdel Kasasira, 'Wikileaks: Museveni discredits Kenya army', *Daily Monitor* (Kampala), 10 September 2011.

[80] Interview with Ethiopian government minister, Addis Ababa, 28 April 2015.

Uganda's liberation struggle, even if it is taking some time for the Somali people to take the medicine'.[81]

Indeed, regional state elites have tended to reject Somali political structures and norms where they do not conform to governance models elsewhere in the region. Alternative, context-specific forms of political authority - including those based around notions of heterarchy – have instead been dismissed or vilified. This has manifested itself particularly in strong, collective regional rejection of the notion that politics based around the unit of the clan represents a legitimate or recognizable building-block of statehood. One senior Ethiopian foreign ministry official interviewed in May 2013 bemoaned the difficulties of establishing 'government' in Somalia as a result of 'internal problems – the politics of the clan' while a senior Ugandan military official at the AU made a similar observation later that day: 'to reinstitute government [in Somalia] we have to be patient…the people still know their clan as their government, the clan system stayed there and that is the problem'.[82] Museveni argued to counterparts at the 2017 London conference mentioned at the start of this article that one of the key impediments to statebuilding in Somalia has been 'the bankrupt ideology of clanism' and that there was a need to 'form political parties with a patriotic, national outlook'.[83] This is not to say that AMISOM forces have not needed to engage in the mediation of clan disputes in their everyday

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[81] Interview with senior Ugandan and AU military and diplomatic official, Kampala, 29 July 2017.

[82] Interview, senior Ethiopian Ministry of Foreign Affairs official, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 1 May 2013; Interview, senior Ugandan military official, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 1 May 2013.

[83] State House Uganda, 'President Museveni's statement'.

operations – as Djiboutian troops did in Deefow in January 2014[84] - but rather that clan politics has been presented and approached as an obstacle to statebuilding by AMISOM elites, rather than as part of the structure of political authority in Somalia.

This rejection of 'clanism' derives, in part, from regional elites' connecting of clans to Somali irredentism, and their association with Islamist politics, in the context of the Global War on Terror.[85] It also, though, speaks to more regime-specific concerns regarding the dangers of sectarianism and ethnic mobilization to peace, security and prosperity. This was a key issue which both the current Ethiopian and Ugandan regimes fought against as rebel movements and which they sought to fend-off in new, post-liberation constitutions, both adopted in 1995.[86] The clan nevertheless represents, as IM Lewis notes, perhaps the core political unit in Somali communities and has, in the case of Somaliland, been partly-incorporated into the political system as a result.[87] Seeking to develop a Somali state which ignores the reality of clans' profound significance is deeply problematic. The same is true in assuming that relationships between identity and politics in one's own polity will play-out in the same way in

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[84] AMISOM, 'AMISOM chief of staff presiding clan mediation', AMISOM website, January 2014, < http://amisom-au.org/2014/01/amisom-chief-of-staff-presiding-clan-mediation/ > (20 March 2018).

[85] Melito, 'Building terror'.

[86] Lovise Aalen, *The politics of ethnicity in Ethiopia: Actors, power and mobilisation under ethnic federalism* (Koniklijke Brill, Leiden, 2011); Nelson Kasfir, 'No-party democracy in Uganda', *Journal of Democracy* 9, 2 (1998), pp.49-63.

[87] IM Lewis, *A pastoral democracy: A study of pastoralism and politics among the northern Somali of the Horn of Africa* (International African Institute, London, 1961), pp. 161-177; Marleen Renders, 'Appropriate "governance-technology"? – Somali clan elders and institutions in the making of the "Republic of Somaliland"', *Afrika Spectrum* 42, 3 (2007), pp.439-459.

another – as regional actors appear to have done with the unit of the clan in their thinking on Somalia.[88]

Furthermore, the only version of political authority which has credibly claimed control of south/central Somalia since 1991 – the ICU – was portrayed as unacceptable by regional actors owing, in part, to its lack of conformity to regional governments' views on the place of religion in politics. In explaining their country's decision to rout the Courts through military intervention, Ethiopian prime minister Meles told a US journalist in late 2006 that the Courts were 'not interested in democratic, secular government in Somalia' while Seyoum told Somali officials and Ugandan forces in Mogadishu in mid-2007 that 'we need to be certain that such Islamic elements will not disturb either the Somali government or the Somalia population'.[89] One of Uganda's most senior military officials noted a few years later that 'the Courts had to go…there is no place for religious rule in Africa today'.[90]

Once again, there is a question here as to whether this is regional actors defending local, 'African' norms or whether it is the imposition of one idea of how politics and

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[88] This is not to say, of course, that clan politics is necessarily progressive or leads to normatively desirable outcomes.

[89] Aweys Osman Yusuf, 'Ethiopian foreign minister says troops will stay', *Shabelle Media Network* (Mogadishu), 29 May 2007; *Washington Post*, 'Transcript: Interview with Meles Zenawi', 14 December 2006, < http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/12/14/AR2006121400820.html > (20 March 2018).

[90] Interview, senior Ugandan People's Defence Force official, Kampala, Uganda, 23 April 2013. These characterizations of the ICU have also, of course, been calibrated in line with Global War on Terror discourses (see Fisher and Anderson, 'Authoritarianism and the securitization of development').

religion should interact upon a neighbouring polity. Historically, Islamic populations have been largely excluded from politics in Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda. The three countries' rulers have rarely shrunk from expounding their Christian identities or presenting Muslim communities as sources of domestic instability or extremism.[91] Islam is nevertheless embedded in the everyday lives and politics of those in the Somali territories and seeking to promote a 'secular' state in this context fundamentally misunderstands – or willfully ignores - the place of religious belief and tradition in indigenous Somali structures of political authority.

Conclusion – Reinventing a regional 'problem'

This article has argued for the importance of analysing state failure, intervention and international relations in Africa through the lens of the region. Both policy-focused and more critical scholars of these phenomena have tended to distinguish 'international' policies, discourses, practices and models from those of the 'local' or 'African'. The case of AMISOM, however, demonstrates the importance of blurring and complicating this binary and interrogating not only how UN and international actors construct, rationalise and engage in military and peacekeeping/peacebuilding interventions but also how actors at the regional level do so.

This study has demonstrated that AMISOM represents a form of 'African solution' to an 'African problem'. This is not, however, a solution derived from regional actors' empathetic consideration for, or understanding of, existing, legitimate forms of Somali political authority – as regional leaders purport. Instead it is one which rests

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[91] Jeff Haynes, 'Islam and democracy in East Africa', *Democratization* 13, 3 (2006), pp.490-507.

firmly on the idea that the Somali crisis can be ended through the imposition of a particular kind of state from the outside. The vision of this state is informed by regional elites' internalisations of Eurocentric, neo-Weberian institutionalist theory on the one hand, and transference of their own domestic governance preferences and experiences onto the Somali context on the other.

The article has further established the relationship between the longstanding regional image of Somalia as threatening, unpredictable and structurally opposed to the postcolonial contours of African statehood and contemporary regional elites' use of language on failed states, lawlessness and responsibility in their rationalization of the AMISOM mission. AMISOM, and the language that has cleared a path for it, ultimately constitutes a disciplinary form of regional governance with a long history.

These findings challenge not only the legitimacy claims advanced by African elites regarding regional intervention missions but also those offered by the governments and organisations which finance them. It has become commonplace for US, UK and UN officials in particular to justify increased support for regional peacekeeping operations in terms of supporting locally-devised 'African solutions', as Danielle Beswick has established.[92] Senior UN officials have also emphasized the importance of investing more heavily in regional peacekeeping forces owing to the 'political leverage' regional states can bring to conflict resolution efforts.[93] This article

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[92] Beswick, 'Peacekeeping, regime security and 'African solutions to African problems'.

[93] *UN News*, 'Evolving peacekeeping landscape requires stronger global-regional partnership, Security Council told', 18 August 2015, < https://news.un.org/en/story/2015/08/506722-evolving-peacekeeping-landscape-requires-stronger-global-regional-partnership > (20 March 2018).

problematizes the assumption that geographical proximity equates to an appreciation or respect for local forms of political authority in peacekeeping operations.

Regions have their own political economies and contain multiple, contested ideas of what states should look like, and how they should relate to one another. It is perhaps unsurprising that political elites should view a regional security crisis through the lens of their own domestic experiences and historical relationships with that country. The AMISOM case raises important questions regarding how far other African-led peacekeeping operations are informed by similar assumptions on the part of regional intervenors. For while AMISOM and Somalia are perhaps extreme cases, they are not unique. At the time of writing, neighbours are militarily committed to peacekeeping operations of various colours across the continent – from eastern Congo to Nigeria, and from South Sudan to Mali. While many of these interventions are premised upon containing or eliminating regional security threats, the AMISOM example underlines the necessity of analysing more closely the broader re-negotiations of regional power politics that such interventions enable.