

Conflicts & Wars

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Foreign Policy, *Failed State Index* (2009)

The authors write that failed states are those which are unable to protect their citizens from violent conflict or provide the social institutions necessary for ordinary life. They ask what should be done by leading states in the global North to reduce the misery which inhabitants of failed states face.

The index in 2009 is the fifth such, relying on 12 indicators of solvency and competency. The 60 worst scoring on the index are deserving special attention. They also draw a distinction between weak states and weak countries – often, a strong state can preside over a failing society (puzzlingly, they use Iran as an example of this). Not all failed states present systemic threats to the entire world; indeed, some are so far-gone that al-Qaeda chose to leave.

Kaplan, *the Remarkable Story of Somaliland*, (2008)

Ironically, non-recognition of Somaliland may have been why it has proven to be the exception to the violence which surrounds it: Somalilanders have to turn to each other for assistance, since there is no expectation that international help is on the way (since it would all arrive through intermediation in Mogadishu). Therefore, people in the North work in solidarity with others, even when disputes arise.

Additionally, Somaliland was colonised by the British, who preferred indirect rule, whereas the south of Somalia was colonised directly by the Italians, who preferred to demolish the traditional repositories of authority and administer the colony directly. These divergent paths began a century ago, and the artificial border between the two remained a wedge throughout the independence period and lead-up to the secession war.

Kaplan describes the Northern state as non-Westphalian, in that its legitimacy derives from sources only found in the local culture and not European notions of statehood, sovereignty, and legitimacy. The north is still not a great place for women, for example, but neither is the south; at least in the North, violence is under control and women feel confident that police can and will prosecute criminals. Clan identity still structures society, but in Somaliland elders mediate conflicts before they get out of hand; compare this to the south, where clan divisions are the organising lines of entire militias.