

# **Management and Settlement of Ethnic Conflicts**

**Autonomy as an Antidote for “Clanism” in Somalia**

**By**

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## 1. Synopsis

Since 1991 Somalia has been considered the archetypical failed State. Following the collapse of the Siad Barré regime in 1991, a plethora of analyses have been conducted all aimed at understanding what has been termed as “State failure” in Somalia. Correspondingly, a large number of external efforts have been made in order to reverse “State failure”. These efforts have ranged from military intervention in 1992 and 2006 to United Nations sponsored conferences. Closer scrutiny of Somalia’s history reveals that order as such has not been absent in the country since 1991. In spite of all the hubbub of Somalia as a failed State, in the North, two relatively peaceful and functioning State-like entities, Somaliland and Puntland, have been established but not internationally recognised. Even in the South, which has been the most volatile since 1991 and where fighting is to date taking place, several processes, most of them not favoured by Western nations, seem to have brought about periodic episodes of order. Flowing from this, this project aims at illustrating that rather than a failed State, the entity Somalia is in fact a coalition of clans ripe for autonomy as a conflict management mechanism. This investigation seeks to establish that in prevailing discourse, Statehood is erroneously perceived as referring to a unitary State typically that found in Europe. Somalia is today uncontestedly considered a failed State because it is viewed through these lens, by which it does not meet the requisite criteria of so-called Statehood. Quite the opposite, on careful scrutiny contemporary Somalia ought not be considered as such as it comprises of a protostates system of relatively stable and well defined Somaliland, Puntland and a more volatile, unstable South. Somalia is composed of three separate autonomous regions. The reason why it has been relegated to the realm of failed States is because the international community has failed to concede that the country can exist as one but be at the same time a federal entity with autonomous units within it. This project calls for a re-thinking of the approaches that have so far been adopted in dealing with Somalia’s impasse. Henceforth, all efforts both local regional and international ought to be geared towards embracing the autonomous entities that have already taken root in the country. In so doing, any international and domestic approaches aimed at dealing with “State failure” will have a higher probability of success in that they will be

reflective of the societal structure rather than dictating to the society how it ought to be structured. Peace in Somalia will not be arrived at by imposing an external government that meets international norms but by an approach that seeks to endorse or legitimise the prevailing societal configuration.