The Future of Statehood in East Africa

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Abstract

With the deterioration of political and security situations in Somalia and Kenya's involvement in the war against al-shabaab as well as its political miscalculation and the lack of exit plan, add to this, the fading democratic conditions in Eritrea, accompanied by the political uncertainties in Ethiopia, since the demise Meles Zenawi Asres and the extermination of the opponents, as shown in last general election, as well as the one-man-show political scenario in Uganda and the likely disintegration of Tanzania into Zanzibar and Tanganyika, indicated by the ongoing elections; the political future of East African governments is predictably taking erroneous turns. It seems therefore, God forbids, there is a political catastrophe in the making as far as the state as an authoritative institution is concerned in East Africa.

One observes that the social fabric of these states, take Kenya, which used to be a solid in its social and political values, as an example, is drastically changing into a pattern-of-Somali-like tribal syndrome. The expiration of the government institutions, civil societies, law and order in Eritrea, the austere political future of Djibouti, the irrepressible and incurable wounds of Burundi and Rwanda are shrilling pointers of such fear.

Not to forget, the strained Muslim-Christian relations, which is now deeply rooted in these communities and states, the thick-headedness of most East Africa's political leaders and the rapid increase of the youth population as well as the proxy war in business between China and the West on the region. These factors are the core indicators of the future of state and strong government in East Africa. The study covers several nations in East Africa including Burundi, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Somalia, Tanzania, and Uganda.

Keywords: East Africa, failed states, religion

1. Introduction

This research is prognostic and extrapolative analytical study. Thus, based on the current state of affairs of these nations the authors endeavor to envisage what the future holds for these countries and governments.

The fundamental objective of this research is to investigate the conditions and factors which contribute to the disruption of the political system; and based on these factors to predict the future of statehood and the political unity of these East African nations. In order to achieve this objective, we collect field data, by means of formal and informal mechanisms, from state agencies and government organizations within the hierarchical structures of these governments. This methodology therefore is mainly an evaluative in nature. The research also provides answers to some key questions including; what are the indicators of state demise? And will East African states fail and subsequently disintegrate and follow the footsteps of others who have already failed such as Somalia? Nonetheless, the guide to our investigation is the process of assessment of likelihoods, forecast and predictions.

As far as the conceptual frame of the research is concerned, the characteristics and the variables are the deterioration of political and security situation, the war against al-shabaab, the fading democratic conditions, the political uncertainties, the level of corruption in the government institutions of these states, the tribal syndrome, the austere political future, the incurable wounds of the past civil wars, the strained Muslim-Christian relations and the proxy war between China and the West. At the threshold of the research, nevertheless, it should be elucidated that some of these states possess feasibly workable political values but fragile and some are on the verge of collapse, while others have already failed and defied the rescue attempts of the international community.

In the *Fragile States Index* of 2014, a yearly report on fragile, week, failing and failed states, most of the East African states are on the top of the list. The report is a reliable and a major source on the strength of a state and referred to worldwide. In 2014, the report ranked 178 nations worldwide; using basic inclusive social science

methodology and a data collected from several key sources; then the data was analyzed critically to achieve an ultimate notch for the Fragile States Index. It applies high and focused "search parameters, scores are apportioned for every country based on twelve key political, social and economic indicators and over 100 sub-indicators that are the result of years of painstaking expert social science research" (Haken et al., 2014).

The table below stipulates the actual situation of these states in rank and score in 2014. In fact, when compared to the score of this year (2015), much remains the same which could be a vital source of concern.

Table 1.

	Country	2014		2015	
		rank	score (out of 120)	rank	score (out of 120)
1	Tanzania	Very High Warning	80.8	High warning	80.8
2	Djibouti	Very High Warning	87.1	High warning	88.1
3	Rwanda	Alert	90.5	Alert	90.2
4	Eritrea	Alert	95.5	Alert	96.9
5	Uganda	Alert	96	Alert	97
6	Burundi	Alert	97.1	Alert	98.1
7	Ethiopia	Alert	97.9	Alert	97.5
8	Kenya	Alert	99	Alert	97.4
9	Somalia	Very High Alert	112.6	Very High Alert	114

This table is an extract from the Fragile States Index 2014, (Source: (Haken et al., 2014, 2015).

Correspondingly, the *Brookings Institution* study on the index of state weaknesses (Rice & Patrick, 2008) shows similar result. Almost all the states are in the top 50 of the Index of State Weaknesses. Brookings Institution ranks 141 developing nations according to their performance in four critical domains: economic, political, security, and social welfare. In fact, the institute defines weak states as a nation that "lack the essential capacity to fulfill critical government responsibilities which are: fostering an environment conducive to sustainable and equitable economic growth; establishing and maintaining legitimate, transparent, and accountable political institutions; securing their populations from violent conflict and controlling their territory" (Rice & Patrick, 2008).

2. Delineation and Theories of Statehood

From the classical to the contemporary times scholars of the subject have not agreed on the definition of the State. For the purpose of this study we will confine ourselves only to those definitions of the state which are related to the core of this study. The most common definition of the state, in the words of some prominent political scientists, classical modern and contemporary, across the ideological precincts, is that "the state is a political organization of human society". In other words, the state "is a composite whole made up of many parts".

The pronounced teacher of political science, Aristotle, contended that the state is a departure from the self, family, tribe and village into a common union for the happiness of all. In his words, "The state is a union of families and villages and having for its ends a perfect and self-sufficing life by which we mean a happy and honorable life" (Copleston, F., S.J., 1946). He also observed that the state must have conscious citizens with purpose and future in life "the state is a body of citizens sufficing for the purposes of life" (Ross, W. D., 1937).

Machiavelli, a well-known statesman for his political ideas in the Prince and the Discourse was the first political thinker to employ the word La Stato. In his thought, the state is a "power system" Machiavelli with varied levels maintained that state is "the power which has authority over men" in other words the "authority which gives orders to all but receive from none" (Machiavelli Nicolo, 1985).

Jean Bodin identified the state as republic; the sovereignty of the state was his main concern. "A state is an association of families and their possession governed by supreme power and by reason" (Dunning, 1896). Thomas Baty sees the state as "complex function … as an organized people, that is, an assemblage of human beings…" (Baty, 1930). He further observes that the core "elements of the state are people, their culture and

traditions, the land they live in, and their organization as a coherent whole" (Baty, 1930). Kelsen defines the state in legal terms, to him the "The state is not its individuals; it is the specific union of individuals, and this union is the function of the order which regulates their mutual behavior…" (Kelsen, 1941).

Thomas Hobbes concentrated on the powers of the state; he wanted the state to possess unlimited powers. The most frequently cited source as an authority on the definition of the state is the Montevideo Convention of 1933. What it says is that the "State does not exist unless it fulfills the conditions of possessing a territory, a people inhabiting that territory, and a public power which is exercised over the people and the territory" (as cited in Perera, 2013). It thus emphasizes territoriality, population, and effectiveness on the part of the authority. Another related issue in the document is the legitimacy of the state; an important component in the existence of statehood.

Apart from the aforesaid definitions there are various theories on the development, maintenance and the formation of the state. State in fact, originates from the embryonic family in which one person heads or leads the rest, this family transforms into clan or tribe; subsequently village sense with loose political nous is created (Curtis Michael, 1962).

For the purpose of accurate understanding of the theory we need to be apprehensive that the formation of the state will not be achieved until and unless the nomadic tribes began to settle and develop agricultural techniques. This is also referred to as an evolution theory. A society formed out of primeval families where the elders are the political leaders subsequently assume the role of government (Tannenbaum Donald, and David Schultz, 1998). Again these families must settle in a territory and takeover it as their own only then they could be conventionally accepted as a state. Put differently, the state will not be born out of non-agricultural, unsettled, and moving nomads.

Another theory of the state is that the state was created by God as He gave divine right to rule to those of royal birth. Most of the early civilizations adopted this theory to maintain stability and development in the state. The remnants of this theory are prevalent in the current systems of world governments in models such as sultanate, kingship and absolute monarchies. In fact, it remains a political and religious doctrine of royal and political legitimacy. However, the original conception of the theory that the monarch is subject to no earthly authority is completely old political fashion; unacceptable to any modern society. In the context of East Africa this theory should be understood within its relevant context (Curtis Michael, 1962).

The third theory of the state is termed force theory; in this theory, a group of individuals or a strong man takes control over a territory and its people and overpower them to obey. Those in control will subsequently form a government. In this theory the idea of a small group or a single person dominates the rest of the residents and forces them to succumb to his or their authority is problematic. Social Contract Theory is also a renowned theory of the state. In this theory, the society of any given territory gives up its powers to a government as needed to promote the well-being of all (Tannenbaum Donald, and David Schultz, 1998).

3. The Current Status of East African States

Brief examination of the condition of East African states in relation to the normal standards of statehood and inline of the above theories will further depict the objective of this study. Uganda, for instance, is one of the most beautiful countries in Africa at the same time categorized amongst "most notorious slaying fields" in Africa Described as the "Pearl of Africa" unrest, ruthlessness and dictatorial leadership and corruption etc., characterizes her post-independence age (Carson, 2005).

It is a political fact that Uganda's turbulence, brutality and authoritarian rule by several very sinister leaders" makes it difficult for democracy to flourish (Carson, 2005). Most scholars of politics and history echo the same concern; Nyabuga talks of "Uganda's troubled political trajectory, with coups and with military dictatorship from the time of Idi Amin to the present period" (Nyabuga, 2015). Others described it as "a sleeping giant" for it is her high number of political appointees makes her one of the most "over-governed" nations in the world. Uganda has "69 Ministers, 327 Members of Parliament, 278 political appointees who include 80 resident District Commissioners and assistants, 75 presidential advisors and 43 private presidential secretaries and their deputies. This is just a picture of Uganda's over-the-top public administration" (Otindo, n.d.).

Eritrea continues to be haunted by her past of long war of independence. Despite her small population of about of six million and her gift of natural resources that include "gold, potash, zinc, copper, salt, possibly oil and natural gas and fish" (Central Intelligence Agency, 2015b); this nation lacks basic government institutions including constitution and structure for judicial system and remains in dire political and economic catastrophe since 1993. Besides, Eritrea has been described as the "biggest sources of refugees in Africa" and the most "militarized societies in the world" (Gebreluel & Tronvoll, 2013). The signpost of a falling nation and an

unmaintainable humanitarian condition is therefore crystal clear in her affairs (Nair, 2012).

Djibouti, a population of about eight hundred suffers from water scarcity and drought although water occupy twenty square kilometer of her territory (Central Intelligence Agency, 2015b) this is despite her existence for over thirty decades after its independence. (OTSUKA, 2014; WFP, 2015). In recent years, Djibouti is greatly influenced by the international players because of its strategic location as a "transit port, global transshipment and a refilling center" (S. Kumar, 2010). Nonetheless, Djibouti may sooner than expected, God forbids, fail based on the Yemen commotion (Styan, 2013).

A prehistoric with an approximate population of ninety-nine million, Ethiopia remains the most populous state in East Africa (Karbo, 2013). Although preeminent in Sub-Saharan Africa region in economic growth state (Miller, Holmes, & Kim, 2015), political freedom and high level corruption remain a weighty issue facing the newly installed prime minister of Ethiopia. In my prognosis, God forbids, if all East African states fail by 2050, Ethiopia will be the last among them. This is not due to the fact that the government is doing better in all aspects, or it practices full-fledge democracy; but it owes this to its citizens. Ethiopians, unlike the Somalis and Eritreans are peace loving folks, less tribal in their political consciousness and respectful to government institutions; in this case the military. Therefore, one should not be politically naïve or emotional about the political strength of Ethiopia.

Kenya is a home to about 42 ethnic groups, (Name, 2013), rich in culture (AFRICAW, 2015a), with a population of around of forty-five million. Besides, Kenya remains one of the nations endowed with abundance of limestone, soda ash, salt, gemstones, fluorspar, zinc, diatomite, gypsum, wildlife and hydropower (AFRICAW, 2015a). However, more than half of its population lives below the poverty line and unemployment stands 40% (AFRICAW, 2015a).

Nonetheless unlike other nations in the region her literacy rate stands 87% (AFRICAW, 2015a), and this make her amongst nations with best literacy rates. Regrettably, this is yet to be translated into an unemployment improvement and professional competency. Kenya's biggest predicaments are corruption, personalized powers in the executive level, and the use of violence by some of its leaders. Africaw 2015 describes the corruption in Kenya: "Corruption in Kenya has gotten so worse to the point where people on the streets consider corruption "normal" part of everyday life" (AFRICAW, 2015a). Sundet provides a complete depiction of the situation; he observed "Kenyan society is characterized by a widening gap between the haves and the have‑nots and the concentration of vast personalized powers in the executive. The use of violence by leaders to serve their own political ends brought the Kenyan state dangerously close to collapse in the aftermath of the 2007 elections" (Sundet et al., 2009).

Burundi with a population of around of Ten million; a country blessed with "nickel, uranium, rare earth oxides, peat, cobalt, copper, platinum, vanadium, arable land, hydropower, niobium, tantalum, gold, tin, tungsten, kaolin, limestone" ; at the same time it remains one of the poorest nations in the World (Nezerwe, n.d.). Burundi is also faced with major problems such as "economic, political and developmental problems" (OCHA, n.d.).

Rwanda is a sister of Burundi, a landlocked nation with a population of around of twelve million (AFRICAW, 2015b). Rwanda therefore, like Burundi faces extreme political and economic problems, God forbids, history may repeat itself in both nations, with recent political stiffness and pressure, with thick-minded political leaders. Ansoms contends that "the current Rwandan elite is mostly Tutsi, urban-based and often born outside Rwanda; while the Rwandan peasantry is mostly Hutu, rural-based and born in the country" (Ansoms, 2008).

Somalia, an ancient land and an important Centre for commerce in history (Jeanne & Hulburd, 1992) as well as one of the most credible locations in the world geography had no central government for the past three decades and example of a failed state which so far defy and becoming immune to any remedy proposed by the international community and regional governments. In the words of Lunn "…Somalia is the world's worst failed state, one that is staggering back onto its feet. Mogadishu is a city where people until recently were surviving, not really living" (Lunn et al, 2012).

Therefore, the challenges and crisis of Somali are multifaceted with complex aspects that no author or work can fully provide accurate illustrations. Our concern in this extrapolation is mainly on the popular assumption that Somalia is tainting its neighbors steadily and gradually.

Tanzania's bumpy marriage which was formed in 1964 between the mainland; a German colony and later a British protectorate formerly known as Tanganyika and the islands of Zanzibar, Pemba, and several smaller islands contributes to the current predicament of that nation. Nonetheless, Tanzania is one of the resilient politically and economically, among the nations in the region; the credit goes to its first president Julius Nyerere,

who led the state with a several sustainable programs including nationalizing key industries and self-reliance. Currently however, unemployment remains the main challenges of Tanzania. According to 2000/2001 Tanzania Integrated Labor Force Survey youth unemployment in the country is 17 percent in mainland and 20 percent in Zanzibar. Ruta's assessment reads "Youth unemployment is high in urban areas than in rural areas mainly because most employment opportunities in urban require skilled labor of which most youths in urban lack" (Rutta 2012).

4. Tribal Societies and State Societies

Tribal society, according to Valvi, is synonymous to "primitive society" or 'preliterate society'. Other related concepts are "simple society", "pre-industrial society" or "folk society," (encyclopeadia.com). In general, these concepts refer to a society that has an egalitarian and informal political system (Non-State and State Societies, n.d.). In contrast, the state, as we have defined in other sections of this work, is an organized political entity living under a single system of government. The characteristics of a failed state are, to mention some, loss of government legitimacy, loss of public sector functionality, and economic collapse" (Dorff, 1999); and these are also the attributes and indications of the dynamism of moving from state society to tribal one. A tribal society therefore should not and cannot run election. For example, Burundi's general election in 2010 was counterproductive as it caused instability and violence. Bouka observed "while the polls were intended to mark the end of the immediate post-transition period and the consolidation of democratic governance after decades of war and crisis, the contested results increased tensions and entrenched the ruling National Council for the Defense of Democracy-Forces for the Defense of Democracy (CNDD-FDD) party (Bouka, 2014).

In tribal societies the central authority is weak and the state has no or less capacity to pressure the people. Most of East African nations are in this state of political condition with diverse levels. Besides, societies in these nations still refer to the tribal chiefs for arbitration and regard them as the primary commanding authority. In fact, in some instances, the governments of these nations succumb to the tribal leaders' decision; as if these tribal heads wield more powers than the government. Tribal societies lack clear rules of succession and depend on loose and weakness leadership. Without perpetual political authority of the state the tribal ideals would interfere with the state administration. This could be seen in East African nations where territories and regions are tribal based not state or political based. Obviously, tribal societies must evolve into state level. State-level societies will have centralized source of authority, monopoly of the legitimate means of coercion and the authority of the state is territorial rather than kin based. "Tribal societies are egalitarian and, within the context of close-knit kinship groups, very free. States, by contrast, are coercive, domineering, and hierarchical" Francis Fukuyama, 2012). When a dictator takes over to rule a free tribal society with an iron-fist they will disintegrate that is what the political historians would tell us and that is what has happen in Somalia.

5. Analysis on the Role of Religion on State Policies and Related Factors in East African States

The role of religion in political rivalry as well as in the political struggle and challenges is a prevalent phenomenon in East Africa. In money cases, it can be degrading as in the case of Somalia. It is the misuse and the way it has been employed and implemented that is debasing and not the system of believe itself. In the case of Tanzania the religious influence on politics seems comparatively amiable. Nonetheless, one must acknowledge that there has always been a tension between Muslims and Christians ever since the colonial passé time (Mbogoni, 2005).

From early 1980s to late 1990s it became the concern of policy makers of the country as religion became an independent actor influencing and weakening state building efforts (Tambila, 2006).

It was durable for the state in Tanzania to contain the visible political role of religion in the country. The revivalist Muslim groups and radical Christians clashed several times and created serious political tension in the state (Gahnström, 2012). The main source of these clashes was, and still remains, inflamed religious sentiments and accusations of religious biasness among rival groups. Historical grievances related to the role of religion in the state formation in Tanzania remain high with sentient contents. The marriage between Tanganyika and Zanzibar also has never received political acceptance. This enforced union is regarded by most Muslims have deliberately destroyed the ancient Islamic distinctiveness of Zanzibar. In general and with other states in the region, the role of religion is seen as belligerent issue in the political history of these nations. Scholars are in agreement that "The role of religion in post-colonial East African societies has been one of the contentious issues inherited from the colonial past, especially in the light of concerns over political stability, one-party and military dictatorships, human rights, democracy and socio-economic justice" (Chande, 2008)

Elsewhere in Somalia and Djibouti the trend of religion and Islam in particular has changed into a sweeping enterprise. Before the collapse of its state Islam was the official religion of the state and its Islamicity were

indeed depicted by Somali Islamic traditions such as syncretic activities, the ecstatic digri (hadro), and the celebration of Mawliid. In other words, the state had nothing to worry as these activities are self-contained sufi entertainment. The state therefore was fully in charge on the political and social affairs of the people. The Salafis; who were spearheaded by the adherents of the Wahhabi trend had the opposite approach; to control the society, to act as unofficial state, to undermine the state, to brand the state as an infidel, and they won in the end. Unfortunately however, they could not form a state as they never had the propensity and the aptitude to form a political institution. It is vital to note that the Salafis and the Wahhabis interpretation of Islam and its basic doctrine of the believe system is authentic approach and it is the path of Prophet Muhammad, nonetheless it has been greatly distorted for personal and political gains. Another point is the fact that Islamists were not the only cause or the source of state collapse in Somalia; the political culture, the attitude of the Somali leaders and Qaran vs Qabil (Nationalism vs tribalism) are other key factors. One also must point out that while the drastic approach of the Shabaab-like groups is unacceptable the Socialist ideology adopted by Siad Barre regime was more outrageous and contemptible to the Muslim society of Somalia.

Djibouti has not failed hitherto and should not be closely associated with Somalia, and the nature of religious influence on the state is far dissimilar. Currently the government requires religious organizations to register with the government agencies in charge of religious affairs; this is to facilitate monitoring. It is interesting to note that, this majority Muslim nation is one of the few Muslim nations in the world which treat the mosque and the church equally. The government subsidizes for the activities of both institutions. The concern of Djibouti government is that they may be dragged into Somalia's misery. This anxiety is a legitimate concern since both nations share border, culture, language, ethnic identity and history. There are ten million people without central government on the door steps of Djibouti and that means lawlessness, radicalism and extremism. Djibouti therefore needs to confront this contamination of religion and state relation.

In Ethiopia, religion and the state relation or the influence of religion on the state policies is something historical and indigenous. Adherents of Islam and Christianity are fifty-fifty; at least on the official papers of the Ethiopian authorities. Christian population follows the Monophysite Coptic Orthodox Church, branch of the mainstream Christianity. Adherents of Islam however include but not limited to ethnic Somalis in the Ogaden region, the Oromo Ethiopians and in the lowland regions as well as in the southern part of the country. For the past centuries Ethiopian Islam was in its traditional form with strong influence of Arab culture particularly in Harar as well as across the Red Sea. Muslims were less conscious on state-religion relations and Islam remained in societal level. This was due to the fact that Ethiopian Islam was based on turuq (singular tariqah) or the Sufi orders particularly Qadiriyyah, the Ahbash, Nabawiyah and Tijanyyah orders. What is common among the turuq is a mutual tolerance and synergy with the governing or the political authorities as well as with their Christian counterparts. For the past three decades however, the tariqah approach has lost ground and new pattern dominates the political and religious activities. It is a phase of restoration and proclamation. There is a feeling that although Muslims have been tolerant with the circumstances or the state-of-affairs proper recognition has yet to be materialized and they blame this for the government which is predominantly Christian. This impermeable new approach is a tinderbox or a time bomb if not a volcano in the making.

The situation in Eritrea is pathetic. From expression of faith to human dignity and human rights, for so long now, these strikingly stunning people suffer under thick-headed autocrat in a doleful political situation. Historically Eritrea was part of Ethiopia after it was incorporated into Ethiopia in 1952 until it attained its independence in 1993. Like Ethiopia, fifty percent of the Eritrean society is Orthodox Christians while the other fifty percent adhere to Islam. Both Christianity and Islam are the official state religion. In fact, the uniqueness of the Eritrean people among East African societies is that they are tolerant in their religious worldview. Christianity and Islam came at the same time to Eritrea and co-existed since. Meanwhile the Constitution guarantees the right to freedom of religion; although in real life religion has no influence on the state. Besides, Eritrea notoriously became, in the last few decades, the hub of religious persecution and human rights crisis. Authorities on the subject contend that "In recent years however Eritrea has become a centre of religious persecution. In its twenty years of post-independence history, the country has seen egregious violations of human rights, including systematic and widespread religious persecution. Individuals who do not subscribe to state ideology are harshly punished by the state apparatus" (Mekonnen & Reisen, 2011)

Religion and people have no influence on the government policies in Eritrea. Ironically the state has no political vision except artificial hostility toward Ethiopia and wicked attitude of befriending the rebel groups of the neighboring states. The blind support for the radical groups is an indicative of this assertion. In Burundi and Rwanda both Christianity and Islam were introduced in the 19th century. And although both religions are against the nature and faculties of traditional religions, majority of the believers in these two countries mix their

previous convictions with their new religion.

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