

Abstract

In recent times, Islamism has been emerging as a powerful and visible element in politics and security. In particular, the salience of Islamism in the realm of state and society is strikingly evident in the activities of local and transnational Islamic political movements. However, the understanding of Islamism has remained blurred for three reasons. Firstly, the study on Islamism is more often than not, wrought with generalities. Secondly, the extensive focus devoted to contemporary dimensions of Islamism has inevitably ignored Islamists antecedents in earlier eras. Thirdly, the international security politics of the Global War on Terror (GWOT) has masked the motivation behind the securitisation of Islamism at the local level. To address these lacunae, this study explored the evolution of Islamism in Somalia. Further, the thesis examined the securitization of Islamism in Somalia in the context of the global war on terror.

The general finding of the study is that Islamism in Somalia has emerged from the fringes of Somali politics to the acclaimed position of a national political actor. The historical and contemporary dynamics in the Islamisation of the state and society in Somalia are substantial and evolving. Islamism has benefited from the fact that Islam is a key organising principle of Somali society and has played a prominent role in times of crisis. The physical proximity of Somalia to the Arabian Peninsula has greatly enhanced Islamic literacy and hence created impetus for revitalisation of Islamism. Further, the unprecedented local-global inter-linkages, religiously-framed geopolitical dynamics, enhanced communication networks, and increased human mobility have significantly assisted in the diffusion of Islamism.

The enhanced contemporary visibility of Islamism has been greatly leveraged by the waning influence of Somali state and lineage politics. The net effect is that different forms of Islamic oriented political movements have dominated the terrain of the dismembered state of Somalia performing multifaceted roles in societal governance. In spite of the presence of favourable ingredients for its entrenchment, Islamism has, however, continuously faced challenges from the competing hegemony of deep-rooted clanism, Sufism, and elitist control of the state. Thus, in spite of the manifestations of pan-Islamic postures, the role of lineage in politics has not completely disappeared.

The thesis further demonstrates that Islamism in Somalia is entangled in a local, regional and global security triangle. The securitisation of Islamism is driven by networks and interests of actors whose alliances are mostly opportunistic in nature. State and non-state actors have utilised the threats of terrorism to propagate a state-centric security paradigm. Consequently, the drive for international peace and security through the GWOT has engendered an intensification of human insecurity. This state of affairs shows that the war on terror in Somalia is not about terrorism *per se*, but rather about how state and non-state actors manipulate the situation to advance their vested local and geopolitical interests. As a result, politics and security in the Horn of Africa and in Somalia in particular, is constructed on a foundation of a fast „shifting sands“.

Key words: Islamism, clan, state, state collapse, Global War on Terror, securitisation, de-securitisation