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BOOK REVIEW

SOMALIA BETWEEN THE CYCLE OF VIOLENCE AND CIVIL WAR: SEARCHING FOR A STABLE GOVERNMENT

Shaul Shay. (2014). *Somalia in Transition since 2006*. Transaction Publishers: New Brunswick and London. 317 pp., Hardback £ 76.99. ISBN 978-1-4128-5390-3.

Abdullahi Haji-Abdi. (2014). *Critical Realism, Somalia and the Diaspora Community*. Routledge: London and New York. 136 pp., Hardback £ 110.00; E-book: £ 27.99, ISBN 978-0-415-71212-5.

INTRODUCTION

Somalia has been striving to ensure peace, security, and political stability in the country with the purpose of overcoming the failed state status it has gained since the beginning of 2000s. The parties involved in this process are as follows: the Islamic Courts Union (ICU), Al-Shabaab, central and local authorities, neighboring countries (Ethiopia and Kenya)**,** and external actors. In 2004, the country established a Transitional Federal Government (TFG) that served until 2012. In 2006, it faced a civil war when invaded by Ethiopian forces. Since then, Somalia has been undergoing interventions, internal transformations, and security challenges. Moreover, many people have been forced to leave their homeland since civil war, which brought about a migration issue in a larger frame. People of Somalia began to immigrate to different regions of the world for different reasons. The United Kingdom (UK) was one of Somali-migrant-receiving countries. Books under review in this article examine the transformation of Somalia politically, militarily, and socially. Shaul Shay's book *Somalia Transition since 2006* examines Somalia's transition roadmap to political stability and security process since 2006, while Abdullahi Haji-Abdi's book *Critical Realism, Somalia and the Diaspora Community* surveys Somalian diaspora community, its activities, and its effectiveness in the UK.

SOMALIAN TRANSITION PROCESS UNDER THE UN

In *Somalia Transition since 2006*, Shaul Shay, former deputy head of the National Security Council of Israel, explores the dynamics of Somalian political transformation process. Shay's book analyzes Somalian transformation process in the context of the UN transition plan, titled "Roadmap for the End of the Transition" since 2006. The author examines the changes in Somalia that took place under the UN plan as seen in the political, societal, and security-related conditions of the country. After a brief introduction, Shay outlines Somalian historical background, the role of Islam, Al-Shabaab, Al-Qaeda, and the ICU in Somalian politics; international interventions, peacekeeping operations, and democratization process in Somalia.

Shay's book focuses more on the post-2006 developments in Somalian transition. His book does not cover intensive literature on peacekeeping or use of force in international interventions and conflict resolution in Somalia; instead, it tries to reveal the possibilities, impossibilities, and roots of the Somalian transition process. Shay lays out the Islamic background in Somalia that started with Hijrah in 622 (the migration of Prophet Muhammad and his followers from Mecca to Medina) and demonstrates the strong Islamic belief in Somalian society. He also discloses the strategies of Islamic organizations and charities during transition. The third chapter of the book divulges information on the ICU: historical background, formation, and the changing structure after the collapse of Ziad Barre regime in 1991. Following the establishment of Sharia courts in 1993, different kinds of umbrella organizations over the courts were formed such as the Sharia Implementation Council (SIC), the Supreme Council of Islamic Courts in Somalia, and the Islamic Courts of Union (ICU), respectively. Leaders of these organizations Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmed, and Sheikh Hassan Dahir Aweys called people for *jihad* (holy war) against the interventions of external forces in Somalia. The ICU led armed struggle against external military operations in Somalia and implemented a highly tight Sharia law. Although the rise of the ICU ended with Ethiopian military intervention in Somalia, Shay argues that increasing influence of the ICU, in particular among the youth, led to radicalization of Somalian society. Nevertheless, one could argue that the main

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reason for the radicalization of Somalian youth was Ethiopia's military intervention in Somalia, which provided fertile ground for Al-Shabab, rather than the rise of the ICU.

Towards the end of 2006 and in 2007, the UN Security Council passed several resolutions that aimed to establish a peaceful transition process and then deploy the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM). In 2009, Ethiopia withdrew its military forces from Somalia and Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmed was elected as president by the parliament, which started a new era for Somalia. In the post-2009 era, Ahlu Sunni Wal Jama'a (ASWJ) (Sufi representative of the Islamic thought), Hizb al-Islam, and Al-Shabaab in particular emerged as the influential players. Shay asserts that political ideology of Al-Shabaab represents global jihadism. His conspicuous claim about Al-Shabaab is that Somalian people prefer the strict implementation of Sharia of Al-Shabaab to anomaly. He also presents financial capabilities and aids as evidence confirming his argument, in addition to the piracy, terror attacks, and violence of Al-Shabaab. His arguments and evidence demonstrate that the lack of central authority and political stability has pushed Somalia to become a safe haven for Al-Shabaab. In the fight against Al-Shabaab, Kenya, Ethiopia, and Uganda were located in the same bloc against the group, whereas Eritrea was accused of backing Al-Shabaab.

Shay also examines the role of the USA, Turkey, and Iran as the actors outside the continent and excluding Eritrea. The chapter titled "International Involvement in Somalia" presents an impressive analysis. Shay addresses the USA's involvement in Somalia as a representative of hard power (use of military force); Turkey's role as a mediator in the peace talks and a facilitator in humanitarian aid as soft power. His interesting argument in this chapter is about Iran. Beyond global actors, Shay notes Iran as a close partner with Somalia and humanitarian aid supply country. Later, he puts forward the political outcomes of the UN backed plan for Somalia's political rehabilitation and argues that it supported and improved political and security-related conditions in the country, although political and security vulnerabilities continued. In the last chapter, the reader finds a conceptual and theoretical analysis about the failed state. Shay categorizes state failure in three types: weak/fragile state, failing/failed state, and ungovernable regions (UGRs). He places Somalia in failing/failed or collapsed state category because of the civil war, conflicts and lack of governance since 1991. He claims that recovery is possible for a failed state with the efforts of its citizens rather than external interventions. He accepts the positive effect of humanitarian aid and occasional use of military force in order to ensure peace and stability. Yet he argues, in the long run, direct ultimate will of the people of the country is needed in recovering from a failed state.

Shay's conclusion remarks reiterate the UN efforts (the Roadmap for the End of the Transition) in achieving political rehabilitation by dissolving the TFG and establishing an elected government led by Hassan Sheikh Mohamud as president in 2012. According to the author's insight, there are two options for Somalia: permanent stability or chaos again. He draws the attention to international community in dealing with domestic and structural problems, as well as acts of terrorism and piracy.

OUTSIDE SOMALIA: MIGRATION AND INTEGRATION ABROAD

One of the results of Somalian civil war was migration. Somalian people immigrated to different countries with the beginning of the civil war for such various reasons as new job opportunities, education, and security. The UK is one of the migrant-receiving countries from Somalia. Abdullahi Haji-Abdi's *Critical Realism, Somalia and the Diaspora Community* examines geo-history of Somalia since 1990s. He applies critical realism as theoretical framework in his study and aims to survey social mobilization, integration, and community activities of Somalian people in the UK. He analyses the Somalian Community Organization (SCO) in three levels: mobilization of Somalian people from Somalia to the UK, composition of the SCO's, and the role of the SCO's coordinators in social and political life. The book focuses on the SCOs located in London, because approximately half of the Somalian people in the UK live in London.

Critical Realism, Somalia and the Diaspora Community is composed of three parts. In the theoretical section, Haji-Abdi sets out the critical realism as the theoretical framework, following Roy Bhaskar's concepts: transcendental realism and critical naturalism. In this sense, he tries to scrutinize the relationships among the SCOs and their role within clan affiliations. He accentuates that clan affiliation has been the first priority of Somalian community in every stage of its history: before and after Islam, colonization era, independence era, military rule, and the civil war. He presents the clan leaders' active role in Somalian politics in each era. In the second part of the book, he moves on to apply the theory (Transformational Model of Social Activity-TMSA) to the SCOs in the UK. He considers the migrants from Somalia to the UK and third generation children who were born in the UK as the Somalian community.

His empirical analysis is based on social activities, interrelationships, and leadership of the SCOs in the UK. His research findings and conducted interviews reflect that Somalian people who immigrated to the UK could be considered as a diaspora community. The co-ordinator of different SCOs plays a considerable role in welcoming new migrants from Somalia, their integration to the UK, and constituting an identity that leads to establishing a diaspora community. His predictions about the future of the diaspora are based on certain factors. First, he once again emphasizes the importance of the clan structure in Somalian society and powerful role of its leaders. Second, he proposes a sustainable state-building project with a direct diaspora involvement. In this sense, Haji-Abdi introduces two new concepts to diaspora literature: "brain drain" and "brain gain." He defines brain drain as the educated and skilled human resources, which are of no benefit to the country (Somalia); brain gain as the contributions of this resource to the national development (p. 112). He highlights

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the transformational role of the SCOs and its leaders as an agent in producing co-operation in the context of diaspora activities. He also stresses the need for the engagement of Somalia diaspora community with the Somalian Federal Government in the post-transitional period. His final recommendation is about a conceptualization by the author himself. In order to achieve the engagement of Somalia Diaspora with Somalian government, according to the author, the transformation of brain drain to brain gain, reverse brain drain in other words, is needed.

CONCLUSION

Somalia has been suffering from a lack of security, political stability, and good governance since 1991. Despite regional and international interventions, it is still an alarming scene for the international community. On the other hand, external efforts, in particular by the UN, the USA, and African Union endeavored to end violence and establish an internationally recognized government in the country. The two books under review in this article investigate the dynamics of Somalian transformation both in internal and external dimensions. They concentrate on political, ideological, religious, and military dimensions and the effect of these factors on the transition period. However, both books have weaknesses at various levels. *Somalia Transition since 2006* discusses regional actors individually in relation to Somalia but it does not discuss regional order or regional security complex as a whole; thus, it lacks a more general/upper perspective analysis. Some of its arguments are literally cliché, such as the role of Ethiopia and ICU, and those issues beg for further analysis. The book gives too much importance to the role of the UN in Somalia. Perhaps the biggest failure of the UN is the situation in Somalia starting with 1990s. If this is the case, is it worth to insert the UN as the main component again in analyzing this conflict?

On the other hand, *Critical Realism, Somalia and the Diaspora Community* does not discuss the current role of the diaspora in Somalia. Do they have any role at all? If yes, what and in what way? Reverse brain drain is a very attractive terminology, but what about the conditions that will be conducive to convince the diaspora to return to Somalia? There is no mention of it; thus, it lacks a better connection between the homeland and diaspora. Overall, the picture of the diaspora is analyzed in a very good academic jargon, and it contributes to the overall literature. However, one gets the sense that it is a bit disconnected from reality. Is there any research, survey, or any type of analysis which argues that the diaspora want to return to Somalia? Probably not. In that sense, it is a bit unrealistic.

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