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The Politics of Security and Identity in Libyan's State Failure Discourse

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Abstract

In recent years, the term “state failure” has become a very popular refrain to describe and identify states that failed to provide positive outcomes and services to their populations. Libya has been defined as a failed state mainly in relation to its precarious security conditions and political instability. Although many argue that the path to peace and security for Libya starts from elections, what this approach often overlooks is the intricate interplay between the politics of governance and security and notions of political identity. Contrarily to that line, this essay argues that Libya's prolonged political and security crisis cannot be fully understood and addressed without acknowledging the central role of identity politics, and tribalism in particular, in shaping Libyan fragmented socio-political landscape. By examining concepts like identity, tribal affiliation, and heterarchy in the context of the state failure discourse in Libya, this essay will offer an original perspective on the inseparability of identity and security questions. This move will be, therefore, not only useful in reconceptualizing state failure in Libya but also in devising more contextually appropriate peacebuilding and governance strategies. Ultimately, this essay highlights that sustainable security and political stability in Libya depend on the integration of identity considerations into state-building frameworks, rather than enforcing rigid and imported nation-state paradigms. This approach emphasizes the need for hybrid political orders that recognize and incorporate Libya's endemic identity pluralism.

Keywords: Identity Pluralism; Heterarchy; Peacebuilding; Tribalism; UN missions.



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