

## **INTRODUCTION: UNDERSTANDING CONFLICT AND PROCESSES OF STATE FORMATION, RECONFIGURATION AND DISINTEGRATION IN THE HORN OF AFRICA**

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Since the end of the colonial period, the Horn of Africa (Eritrea, Ethiopia, Djibouti, Somalia, Sudan and South Sudan) has been affected by a large number of inter-state and civil wars (Woodward, 1996). Uganda is part of the region's security dynamics and a member of its organization, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development.

In contrast with West and Southern Africa, the ill-defined nature of the borders in the Horn of Africa has led to two high-intensity inter-state wars, namely the 1977-1978 war between Somalia and Ethiopia and the 1998-2000 war between Eritrea and Ethiopia, and inter-state disputes between Djibouti and Eritrea, Eritrea and Yemen and more recently between Sudan and South Sudan (Jacquin-Berdal, 2002; Kornprobst, 2002).

Wars and famines have triggered major displacement within countries and across borders, making the Horn one of the main regions generating refugees and internally displaced persons. By the end of 2007 the region hosted 815,200 refugees and in 2012 the total was 1,266,375 (Lomo, 2006; UNHCR, 2012). Specific border areas such as the Sudan-Ethiopia, Sudan-Uganda and Somalia-Ethiopia borders have been in an 'intermittent state of crisis' with movements of refugees back and forth for the last 40 years (Clapham, 1996).

Environmental factors have affected groups in different areas and countries, leading to food crises associated with recurrent droughts, floods and crop pests (Thrupp and Megateli, 1999) but also with the politicization of these crises and the related relief, and with conflicts and displacement (Markakis, 1998).

Furthermore, the movements of pastoral groups within and across borders in their search for water and grazing land are paramount to understanding the regional political arena (Catley, *et al.*, 2013). The Horn of Africa states rank among the top 10 worldwide in terms of size of pastoralist population. Sudan comes first, Somalia third, Ethiopia fifth and Kenya sixth (Lomo, 2006).

## **The region's security dynamics**

In the post-World War II and Cold War periods, external interventions further exacerbated the region's pattern of power and of politics, where the 'enemy of my enemy is my friend' and alliances kept shifting in the regional political arena (Keller, 1997). In the post-Cold War period the combined policies and interventions within the domestic, regional and global political arenas to avoid the recurrence of war in the Horn of Africa have led to divergent outcomes (Woodward, 1996). This tends to demonstrate that the nation-state model promoted during the post-colonial and Cold War periods, with its ideology of national political and cultural unity and economic homogeneity, has not brought the expected results of stability and peace in the region.

The past and current pitfalls in terms of the distribution of power and economic benefits have created tensions (Markakis, 1998). These are mainly linked to governments' failure to acknowledge and accommodate demands for reform and change (Clapham, 2007; Compagnon, 1998; Young, 1997). Central powers' failure to address existing complex and fragile livelihoods in the design and implementation of political, development and social engineering projects is left unaccountable. These factors, coupled with the state's inability to extend its institutions and agents to the periphery, have resulted in the proliferation of insurgent movements driven by a diversity of aims, including secession (Clapham, 2007). The recurrence of conflict and the state's lack of monopoly of the means of coercion have resulted in the proliferation of weaponry in this region (Kiflemariam Gebrewold and Byrne, 2006). Indeed, these tensions have often led to local conflicts of various intensities and multiple dimensions.

These tensions have also led to inter-state wars often justified in terms of respect for sovereignty or security of the nation-state. Moreover, conflicts of internal origin in the Horn of Africa have spill-over effects beyond the national administrative borders resulting in the regionalization of conflicts (Cliffe, 1999).

These historical, ideological, political, economic, territorial and environmental factors have created tensions between states resulting in enmity, rivalry and mutual suspicion. This rivalry is played out in the regional political arena resulting in cross-border support for specific insurgent movements involved in local conflicts against the rival state (Abbink, 2003).

These interferences in each other's internal affairs contribute to the formation and escalation of conflicts within one state and between states and ultimately lead to destabilization in neighbouring states (Cliffe, 1999; Keller, 1997).

Due to the aforementioned features of the regional political arena, the dynamics of violence need to be examined at regional level.

Finally, these factors have a common denominator: their association with the particular trajectories of state formation in the region. Indeed these trajectories show that tensions exist between the logic of building states and that of ensuring that war will not recur (Call and Wyeth, 2008). This brings us to

the definition of the book's central issue and its key contribution to the debates on the process of state formation and the analysis of the factors that exacerbate trends towards reconfiguration, consolidation or, in contrast, disintegration of the region's states. Finally, the book engages with the debates around external state reconstruction projects in Africa and specifically in the Horn of Africa.

### **War and state formation: the law of limited return**

"If protection rackets represent organized crime at its smoothest, then war-making and state-making – quintessential protection rackets with the advantage of legitimacy - qualify as our largest examples of organized crime. Without branding all generals and statesmen as murderers or thieves, I want to encourage the value of that analogy [...]. A portrait of war-makers and state-makers as coercive and self-seeking entrepreneurs bears a far greater resemblance to the facts than do its chief alternatives [...].

To the extent that the threats against which a government protects its citizens are imaginary, or are the consequences of its own activities, the government has organized a protection racket. Since governments themselves simulate, stimulate and even fabricate threats of external war, and since the repressive and extractive activities of governments often constitute the largest threats to their own citizens, many governments operate in essentially the same way as racketeers. There is, of course, a difference: racketeers, by conventional definition, operate without the sanctity of governments." (Tilly, 1985: 169-171)

The key research question of this book is how to relate the process of state formation to war and armed conflict in the Horn of Africa.

Several studies relate this process in the Horn of Africa to the recurrence of conflict (Clapham, 2003; Jacquin-Berdal, 2002). These studies concede that war-making leads to state-making in some cases (Eritrea and the three-decade war for independence) (Iyob, 1993; Pool, 2001). However, with the recurrence of conflicts the law of limited return of war-making in relation to state consolidation prevails (Jacquin-Berdal, 2002; Reid, 2005). Indeed the wars in the Horn of Africa seem to have led to more cases of state disintegration (and ultimate collapse) than state consolidation (Clapham, 2003).

The book seeks to understand how the processes of state formation, disintegration and reconfiguration explain the recurrence of conflict in the region. In doing so it explores the tensions between state and peace consolidation in order to identify the key factors, actors and moments of crisis that magnify this tension and lead to the escalation of conflicts.

The states' trajectories in the region show that outcomes seem to diverge in the relationship between state and war. Indeed, in some instances, war has led to: a) state formation/creation (two cases in point are Eritrea during the war for independence and Southern Sudan until it became South Sudan); b) to state disintegration (Somalia after the fall of Siyad Barre); c) state weakening, a case in point being the relapse into conflict by Eritrea and Ethiopia during the 1998-2000 border war which compromised the state- and nation-building projects of the Eritrean People's Liberation Front/ People's Front for Democracy and Justice (EPLF/PFDJ) in Eritrea, and finally the relapse into conflict between Sudan and South Sudan

in contested areas along the international border; and d) to state reconfiguration, a case in point being the civil war against the Derg that allowed the Tigrayan People's Liberation Front/Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (TPLF/EPRDF) to implement an ethnic-based federal model in Ethiopia in clear rupture with past political statebuilding projects.

State and society relations are paramount to understanding the divergent outcomes in the relationship between state-making and war-making in the region. Indeed, bearing these elements in mind an analysis of the relationship between conflict and the state-formation process seems to confirm the law of limited return. Up to a certain extent, war-making can lead to state-making and/or creation and reconfiguration, but relapse into conflict may lead to the opposite outcome, thereby contributing to weakening and ultimately disintegration of the state.

### **The Horn of Africa's changing map and boundaries**

In the post-Cold War era, the reconfiguration of Ethiopia and Sudan and the creation of two new states – Eritrea (24 May 1993) and South Sudan (9 July 2011) – reconfigured the Horn of Africa's state borders and created the need for newly landlocked states (Ethiopia and South Sudan) to consider alternative routes to the sea. Eritrea had been an Italian colony (1890-1941), hence its claim to a separate trajectory as a sovereign state. The legitimacy of its claim to self-determination was based on its past as a colony. In the aftermath of World War II and of the defeat of the Italian forces in the region, Eritrea was under a transitory British Military Administration (1941-1952) up to the controversial international decision to grant Eritrea autonomy within a federation with Ethiopia (1952-1962). The federation was abrogated in 1962 and Eritrea was incorporated as the 14th Province of the Ethiopian Empire. This decision resulted in a three-decade war for independence in Eritrea and it was only reversed in 1991 in the aftermath of the overthrow of the Derg by the combined EPLF and the TPLF forces. Eritrea finally became independent on 24 May 1993, after a referendum.

The creation of a new state (Eritrea) in a volatile, conflict-prone region posed specific challenges to contiguous neighbouring states. The key lesson to be learned from Eritrea's creation and subsequent foreign policy towards the region is the need to pay particular attention to border delimitation and demarcation at the time a state is created and recognized. This aspect acquires particular significance in mitigating and eliminating potential tensions arising out of border disputes. As the war between Ethiopia and Eritrea confirmed, once established, borders can only be changed at great cost and this border remains a barrier between peoples (Dias, 2008: 222; Clapham, 2010: 187). The boundary disputes between Sudan and South Sudan further confirm that borders are not mere lines on maps, they are an inescapable fact of borderlanders' daily lives and attempts at changing those borders have been rare (Clapham, 1996; 2010:195; Jacquin-Berdal, 2002: 219).

**Table 1: Horn of Africa's contiguous neighbours and their shared borders**

State	Contiguous neighbouring countries and length of shared boundaries between dyads	Total
Djibouti	Eritrea (113 km)/Ethiopia (337 km)/Somalia (58 km)	3
Eritrea	Djibouti (113 km)/Ethiopia(912 km)/Sudan(605 km)	3
Ethiopia	Djibouti (337 km) /Eritrea (912 km)/Kenya (830 km)/Somalia (1.626 km)/South Sudan (606 km)/Sudan (1,000 km)	6
Kenya	Ethiopia (830 km)/Somalia (682 km)/South Sudan (232 km)/Uganda (933 km)	4
Somalia	Djibouti (58 km)/Ethiopia (1. 626 km)/Kenya (682 km)	3
South Sudan	Ethiopia (1000 km)/Kenya (232 km)/Sudan (2000 km)/Uganda (435 km)	4
Sudan	Eritrea (605 km)/Ethiopia (606 km)/South Sudan(2000 km)	3
Uganda	Kenya (933 km)/South Sudan (435 km)	2

Source: Anderson (2003: 235,260,268,447,733,752,833).

As above the table shows, after the end of the Cold War and despite significant changes in the region's map, Ethiopia is still the country that shares the most international borders with other Horn of Africa countries (6), followed by Kenya and South Sudan (4). Although the region lacks a clear hegemon, what happens in the majority of the Horn of Africa's countries is very important to Ethiopia. In addition, due to the interconnectedness of conflict and the region's security dynamics, each country's domestic politics are intertwined with the regional political arena.

### **Contemporary debates: key questions and events**

Underlying the book are five assumptions. First, politics and conflict in the Horn of Africa need to be understood simultaneously in the domestic, regional and global political arenas. Second in order to understand present-day conflicts we need to look into the archaeology of conflicts in their relation to the particular states' trajectories. Third, the existing literature on weak and failed states overlooks how these states undergo processes of reconfiguration (Doornbos, 2006) and how regional actors mobilize local and global agendas in order to pursue their own aims in the domestic and regional arenas. Fourth, the study of local actors highlights their agency as they compete with other actors for control of critical local resources. Fifth the recurrence of conflict in the domestic and regional political arenas hampers accommodation of different groups' demands and perpetuates the reproduction of the practice of resorting to armed force to negotiate political space and obtain control of the state (Kaiser and Okumu, 2004).

Since World War II, the Horn of Africa has been characterized by a shifting pattern of alliance formation forged against the backdrop of external involvement in the region, which has tended to

exacerbate the region's conflicts. However, external involvement has not reduced the agency of the states in the region.

What distances the Horn of Africa from other regions in Africa is the region's geo-strategic location. The Horn of Africa is a bridge between Africa and the Middle East and its nearness to a strategic "chokepoint", Strait Bab el Mandab, has made the region more prone to external involvement than others in Africa.

US policy towards Africa has tended to be more reactive than proactive (Schraeder, 1993: 190). The events have overridden planning and have shaped policy approaches towards the region rather than the other way round. If this holds true for most of African countries, in the Horn it becomes more salient when bearing in mind key events that have had as their outcome the reinforcement of a shifting pattern of alliances.

Six key events have influenced the greatest changes. During the Cold War, the first one was the 1977-78 war between Ethiopia and Somalia. At this critical juncture the US fell short of losing an anchor state in the region. When Mengistu failed to obtain military support from Washington, following the logic of superpower rivalry, Ethiopia turned its back on the US and successfully sought an alternative external patron in Moscow. In reaction to this major shift the US provided support for Siyad Barre's Somalia. During this period the US sustained its involvement through support for the Khartoum, Nairobi and Mogadishu axis and for non-state actors that shared the common aim of overthrowing the Derg regime in Ethiopia. In this period, US strategy was to encircle a state, Ethiopia, by forging alliances with contiguous neighbouring countries (Sudan, Kenya) and supporting non-state actors opposing the Derg (EPLF, TPLF/ EPRDF and, in the end, the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF). The aim was to contain the expansion of communism in the region.

In the aftermath of the Cold War, the second event was brought together under the promising banner of providing support for a new breed of African leaders, the so-called African Renaissance leaders, former guerrillas turned state builders. During this period the US sustained its involvement by supporting the Asmara, Addis Abeba and Kampala axis, personified in the promising leaders Isaias Afewerki (Eritrea), the late Meles Zenawi (Ethiopia) and Yoweri Museveni (Uganda). At this critical juncture, US strategy was to encircle a state, Sudan, by forging alliances with neighbouring countries that shared the common goal of containing the expansion of militant nationalism in the region, as embodied in the National Islamic Front's (NIF) rise to power in Sudan in 1989. As a result, relations between the US and Sudan deteriorated, culminating in the placement of Sudan in the US list of states harbouring terrorists in 1993 and the shutdown of the US embassy in Khartoum in 1996 (Iyob and Keller, 2006: 107).

1998 was a turning-point year. First the unexpected escalation of a border incident into a full-scale war between Ethiopia and Eritrea in May 1998 made the post-Cold War Addis-Asmara-Kampala axis falter. Secondly, and perhaps more significant in terms of US foreign policy towards the region, the

bombings of the US Embassies in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam placed the Horn of Africa, and Somalia in particular, on Washington's radar. The perpetrators of the attack were said to be part of Al Qaeda's Eastern Africa cell and Somalia was used as a transit point.

2001 marked a critical rupture from past trends of US involvement in the region. After 9/11, these states have been widely considered in international relations owing to their strategic location and natural-resources, their role in the Global War on Terror and the potential for Islamic radicalisation in the region. At the time, the US Administration even considered approving military action in Somalia (Menkhaus, 2004: 68). Quite significantly, since 2003 the US has set up its sole military base in Africa in Djibouti: the Combined Joint Task Force for the Horn of Africa (CJTF/HOA).

2006 was another critical year marked by the rise and fall of the militant Islamist movement in Somalia, the Islamic Courts Union (ICU), due to Ethiopia's forceful intervention in Somalia and the creation of the Africa Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), which provided critical support for the Transitional Federal Government (TFG). The US air campaigns in Somalia tied it up to Ethiopia's approach. In October 2008, Al-shabaab's attacks in Hargeisa (Somaliland) and Bossaso (Puntland) confirmed the presence of mujahedeen in Somalia, including a US citizen from Minnesota who was of Somali origin. The end of the World Cup in July 2010 was marked by al-shabaab's first attacks outside Somalia in Uganda's capital, Kampala.

Finally, 2011 witnessed the creation and recognition of the youngest state in Africa, South Sudan, and the worst drought in the region in August 2011, which resulted in a massive inflow of refugees from Somalia to neighbouring countries.

Reflecting in part US cycles of engagement and disengagement in the Horn of Africa and China's growing interest and engagement in the region, particularly in Sudan and South Sudan, analysis from an international relations standpoint has often taken a reductionist approach to the region, considering these states mere secondary actors on a chessboard where the rivalry between superpowers and/or rising powers (Clapham, 2009) is the decisive factor in understanding the region's security dynamics.

In stark contrast to these approaches, the contributors in this book explore the international and domestic politics of the Horn of Africa "from within". In particular, interplays between domestic politics and external relations, intra-regional affairs and the impact of international events on the region are their key focus. The aim of the book is therefore to enhance knowledge on the Horn of Africa from a regional perspective, grounded on secondary and primary empirical evidence.

Given these challenges, the questions we asked our contributors at the outset included:

1. What is the relationship between the region's states' trajectories and the recurrence of conflict?
2. Which are the historical, economic, political, territorial and environmental factors that have led to the recurrence of conflict in the Horn of Africa?

3. What role have international interventions played in the dynamics of conflict in the Horn of Africa?

4. How does the recurrence of conflict in the domestic and regional political arenas relate to pre and/or post-electoral violence?

The book's contributors used both qualitative and quantitative methods that included in-depth case-studies of a range of perceptions and representations of both local and international actors on the recurrence of conflicts, collection of documents and archival research, participant observation, a questionnaire complemented by observation and semi-structured interviews.

### **Overview of the book**

Ethiopia stands out in this book as the region's potential hegemon, its guarantor of stability and order and a strong, consolidated state. However, the authors converge in bringing to our attention key changes on the domestic front and in relations between state and society within Ethiopia that place it in an uncertain predicament. Indeed, the chapters by Manuel João Ramos, Elsa González Aimé and Ana Elisa Cascão focus on Ethiopia, bearing in mind the intertwinement between domestic and regional politics. In chapter 1 Ramos reflects on the domestic and regional cleavage between Muslims and Christians. He argues that this cleavage is key to understanding Ethiopia's containment policies towards the expansion of political Islam in the region and the federal and local authorities' internal containment policies towards Muslim Ethiopian citizens. Still focusing on the relationship between state and political Islam, in Chapter 2 Elsa González Aimé analyses Ethiopia's forceful intervention in Somalia from a critical security studies perspective. She argues that this intervention was the product of a securitisation move with domestic, regional and broader international aims. It was intended to secure the Ethiopian state and to reshape the image and political project of the Ethiopian People's Democratic and Revolutionary Front both domestically and internationally, after the generalised criticism in 2005 of the incumbent party's conduct after the elections. With regard to the connection between Ethiopia and US policies in Somalia, the author draws our attention to the need to introduce an element of caution in our analysis. She argues that the link was not clear and was indeed avoided. Chapter 2's key contribution is to offer an analysis on Ethiopian intervention in Somalia in relation to its own socio-political domestic context.

Patrick Ferras and Ricardo Real P. Sousa centre their analysis of the region in light of the potential and limitations of the new African Peace and Security Architecture. Pedro Barge Cunha focuses on the role of non-state actors in the region and more specifically on the role of private military and security companies in Somalia. Alexandra M. Dias' chapter focuses on the state reconstruction project in Somalia since Ethiopia's intervention in 2006 and more specifically in the post-transition period. Alexandre de Sousa Carvalho moves our attention further south and reflects critically upon the formula that recommends power-sharing agreements as the best means to overcome electoral violence and avoid the

relapse into conflict in light of Kenya's elections in December 2007 and March 2013. Finally, Aleksi Ylönen and Ana Elisa Cascão focus their studies on previously peripheral areas that have become key borderlands since the creation of South Sudan. Ylönen does so in relation to South Sudan's predecessor (Sudan) and Cascão advances our understanding of South Sudan and Ethiopia's political approaches to access to and distribution and allocation of critical natural resources in peripheral areas in South Sudan and Ethiopia's Gambella region. She challenges our conventional understanding of the central role of oil as a cause of conflict. She puts forward the argument that both land and water have been overlooked in conflict analysis in the two case studies, highlighting that these factors should stand as additional natural resources to be considered in a complex puzzle of conflicts.

Taken together, these essays shed light on the relationship between conflict and the trajectories of the region's states and contribute to our understanding of state formation processes in non-western regions and of the pitfalls of external state's reconstruction projects. In fact, the case studies show that in contrast to the European experience the outcome of war should be analysed on a case-by-case basis. In some instances war further weakens the state rather than consolidating it, as in European state's formation experience. The focus on the trajectories of the state and the relationship between state and society on a case-by-case basis offers a unique vantage point in understanding the international implications of each country's domestic trajectories in the state formation process.

Students of the Horn of Africa's politics, whatever their theoretical starting point, must therefore accommodate the fast-evolving nature of state-society relations in states at the crossroads of regional and global dynamics. The Horn's strategic location brought it back into the limelight of the international political agenda with the issues of terrorism and piracy at the forefront. However the most fascinating and challenging dynamics are still taking place in the domestic and regional fields.

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