
*The Horn of Africa: Intra-state and Inter-state Conflicts and Security*, edited by Redie Bereketeab, has shown that conflicts are *semper et ubique* as well as being virtually commonplace among all mammals. A concern in the case of homo-sapiens is how to manage conflict so that it does not destroy the human species. Recall, for example, the one hundred years’ war (1337-1453), Thirty years war (1618-1648), World War I (1914-1918), World War II (1939-1945), post-independence civil wars in West Africa (Nigeria, Liberia, Sierra Leone, etc.) with their disastrous consequences. In a way, conflicts in the Horn of Africa seem to follow the same pattern of individuals and groups attempting to resolve self- and group-interests with the use of the instruments of coercion.

This informative volume is made up a foreword (by Cyril Obi), three parts (with nine chapters) maps and figures, comprehensive abbreviations, selected chronology of events, and an index. As suggested in the forward readers are enjoined to visualize the political conflicts and imbroglio in the Horn (Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Somalia and the Sudan) holistically – that is whether seen from the perspective of state, intra-state and inter-state conflicts, the absence of peace in the Horn has its roots in a long and complex history, political economy, state formation processes and struggles, international intervention, identity conflicts and environmental change. Untangling the complex web of conflicts, understanding the connections at the local, sub-national, national, regional and global levels, engaging in deeper reflections and proffering viable options for promoting participatory, sustainable people-centered peace and development in the Horn remain compelling challenges (p. xiii).

Part I of the publication consists of an introduction and two chapters. In the introduction, Bereketeab provides a litany of the causes of the conflict in the region. These are: livelihood resources, politics, external interventions, socio-economic, lifestyle, dysfunctional governance practices, under-development [and the patterns of colonialism] (p. 7). For example, the colonial policy of divide and rule resulted in the spread of Somalis in the region (including Djibouti, Kenya, Ethiopia and Somalia) – a situation that led to the call for an irredentist war intended to reunify all Somalis in Greater Somalia. Critical to the discussion in this chapter is how to promote national security in the face of conflicts in the Horn. Since the internal dysfunctional economic and governance structures are a reality the question is how to promote safety in unstable societies.
So far, as underscored in the 207-page publication, international attempts to promote security have been unsuccessful because these alien or foreign actors tend to pursue peace arrangements in the area within the context of their insular interests (p. 19). Chapter 2, written by Kidane Mengisteab, does not only expatiate on the relationship between poverty, inequality and the problematic interstate conflicts in the Horn of Africa but also examines some of the theories that explain these phenomena with a view to modifying some to suit the situation (p. 27). Theoretically, Kidane finds the theory of relative deprivation to be most appropriate in explicating the major cause of conflict in a region that is one of the poorest in the world (pp. 27-29). Indeed, in a popular reggae lyric “a hungry man is an angry man.” This truism is apposite and must be taken seriously with respect to the poor since their anger could be displayed violently on a system responsible for the group’s deprivation.

In Chapter 3, Hassan Mahadallah tackles the issue of leadership in the area and the extent to which its deficiency has not only been a bane in the region but also the continent. The bottom line is that not a single country in the Horn has been able to produce a transformational leader that one could boast of or applaud (pp. 49-59). Another sad commentary on the character of the leaders of some of these countries is that they have been dislodged from power not through or by legitimate elections but by ethnic conflicts and civil wars because they have refused to abdicate after a pool. In the end, such conflicts tend to lead to economic slump.

Part 2, “Conflict Dynamics,” is made up of three chapters. Centrally, in chapter 4, Kassahun Berhanu alludes to the antithesis of conflict and security. Inter- and intra-state politico-religious conflicts breed insecurity and the lack of security impacts economic development that a priori advances underdevelopment in the region (p. 89). Abdalbasit Saeed’s chapter 5 on the issue of border changes between North and South Sudan following the long political clashes between these entities is quite provocative. The bloody political divorcement between Ethiopia and Eritrea is a reminder of how catastrophic such an act could be if not adequately managed. Historically, the colonial amalgamation of Northern Islamists and Southern Christians and Animists partially prepared the ground for the conflict in the Sudan. Yet, if there is any lesson to be learned from the turbulent inter- and intra-state conflicts in the Horn, it is driven home in the procedure undertaken to balkanize this huge nation-state. It was to this end that a referendum, *inter alia*, was applied as a peaceful methodology to achieving the goal of self-rule for the South (p. 96). Even so, an establishment of borderline between two or more states can be problematic and conflictive especially since it can involve splitting an ethnic group into different states and contestation for the control of raw materials (e.g., oil) and water – the source of life. The conflict over the control of the White Nile is likely to persist in the foreseeable future and exacerbate an already combustible conflict (p. 109).

In chapter 6, “Political Violence in the horn of Africa: a framework for analysis”, Seifudein Adem brings to the fore major problems that continue to dog much of Africa – the issues of citizenship, the state and its legitimacy in the eye of compatriots (p. 117). To paraphrase Max Weber, power relations are legitimate only to the extent that those involved in them, the subordinate as well as the dominant, believe them to be so (p. 118). It is within this context that Adem lucidly summarizes the thrust of the chapter thus: “there is a link between the

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