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Author(s): Samson S. Wasara
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Conflict and State Security in the Horn of Africa: Militarization of Civilian Groups

Samson S. Wasara*

Abstract

The Horn of Africa experiences conflicts that set states against states and communities against communities resulting in political turbulence and human tragedy. This situation is connected with the inability of states to pursue rational policies that call for social cohesion. Governments and dissident political movements induce civilians to become accomplices of senseless wars. Thus, conversion of civilian populations into military and paramilitary groups is a common feature of this region. Some communities take advantage of the proliferation of modern weapons to arm themselves for cattle rustling, banditry and taking revenge. Civilians participate in different capacities in military-like activities in areas affected by armed violence. Prospects for containing civilian militarization depend on concerted pressure of civil societies and the international community on states and armed opposition movements to seek peaceful settlement of disputes. The paper argues that stakeholders in conflict situations should be persuaded to promote dialogue leading to agreements, subsequent demobilisation of ex-combatants and disarmament of civilian groups. Therefore, prospects for social stability depend on how communities and states consider that their security is guaranteed.

Introduction

The Horn of Africa is known for decades as one of the hottest geographical spaces of internal dissidence and interstate conflicts. Africa's longest civil wars occur in this region (Assefa, 1999). This was the case of the Eritrean war of liberation against Ethiopian regimes. The civil war in Sudan is another civil war that is associated in one way or the other with the region. States have disintegrated in the Horn. The emergence of Eritrea and the prolonged absence of a recognised government in Somalia constitute the basis of anxiety in the community of states in that part of Africa. States affected

*Associate Professor, Department of Political Science, University of Juba, Khartoum, Sudan

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by conflicts tend to bolster their own security and try to weaken other states believed to be undermining their sovereignty.

Inability of states to dialogue with each other or with their internal dissidents results in armed violence and the involvement of civilians in civil wars. Perception, attitudes and actions of parties to the various conflicts shape the process of militarisation in the region. States refuse to admit that there are real internal problems. Victims of injustice are left with no other option but to fight for their survival. When a conflict flares into armed violence its cause is linked to a neighbouring state or another external power. Then conflict escalates beyond the control of the initial actors. Dissident groups launch recruitment campaigns among disenchanted civilian groups while governments go for forced conscription.

Both ways, civilians must get involved voluntarily or by force. The situation we are describing makes the size of national armies and rebel formations to bulge with units of irregular forces such as militias and self-defence groups. Experience from Sudan, Kenya and Uganda shows those cattle rustlers and armed bandits take the advantage of civil wars or interstate wars to acquire modern assault rifles for their criminal motives. These are some of the issues this paper would like to address in the study of civilian militarization.

This overview stimulates our thinking about the main purpose of the paper. We intend to treat those interstate wars, civil strifes and cross-border involvement of actors that are agents of civilian participation in violent conflicts. This study includes the description of some conflicts, mechanisms of civilian involvement and linkages. Examples from the conflict in Sudan will enrich the study. Probing into patterns, policies and trends of civilian militarization as well as the identification of interactive groups could be explained with various examples.

Theoretical Explanation of the Problem

Reverting to appropriate theories provides a sound basis for understanding conflict and security situation in the Horn of Africa. In this respect, theories of conflict and security would provide a reasonable understanding of events behind processes of civilian participation in armed violence. Also, concepts of governance, economic development and social welfare are instrumental in explaining human interactions in the situation of protracted conflicts in the region.

Relational analysis provides the significance of relationships in social and political interactions between communities themselves and between them and states in a specific geopolitical context. In the case of this study, this tool of analysis is relevant to the states in the Horn of Africa. Well-being of individuals, communities, and states can be defined in terms of the factors

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that determine relationships. This is what specialists (Schluter & Lee, 1993) treat as "The R Factor". The basis of understanding conflict, security and collective well-being of people includes relationships that dominate interactions of two or more entities in contact with one another. Hence, conflict and security situations in the Horn of Africa can be explained in terms of factors such as poor economic performance, uncertainties in governance, breakdown of law and order and recurrent violence.

Poor economic performance comes out clearly when statistical key indicators for certain periods of measurement are lacking. Figures are not available in the periods coinciding with civil wars in the periods coinciding with civil wars and insecurity in some countries in the Horn of Africa. For example in Somalia, the GNP per capita annual growth rate for the period 1965–80 was –0.1%. In the same table, there was no data for the same variable during the period 1980–1993. This is the same situation for Ethiopia and Sudan, whose GNP per capita annual growth rates were 0.4% and 0.8% respectively (UNDP 1996: 186–187). Even Kenya, which has not known any civil war, shows a decline in per capita annual growth rates for the same periods 1965–80 and 1980–93. Kenya's GNP per capita annual growth rates were 3.1% and 0.3% for the two periods respectively.

Ugandan and Ethiopian economies showed an upward trend in the late 1990s. This has happened when the two countries began to recover from past political turbulence. According to Africa Development Indicators 2001 (World Bank, 2001:5), the GNP per capita average annual growth rates for Uganda and Ethiopia were 3.9% and 0.8% respectively for the period 1988–99. But Kenya's per capita annual growth rate remained stagnant at 0.0% while no figures on Sudan, Somalia and Eritrea were available for the same period. The Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) report (UN, 2002: 33) affirms that "For Kenya, the main impediment to development is poor economic governance, weak infrastructure, widespread of corruption, escalating insecurity, poorly managed public resources and public sector inability to deliver services efficiently have undermined development". This situation analysis applies to the majority of countries in the Horn of Africa.

In other words, the issues at stake in the region comprise accountability, flexibility, legitimacy and stability. These issues influence the way people look at key problems of conflict and security. The problem of conflict could be easily identified whenever sets of dysfunctional relationships appear in a given interaction. For example, when civil war devastates Sudan, or when neighbouring Eritrea and Ethiopia wage a border war, people know that something has gone wrong and there is conflict. Then there is a general belief that insecurity prevails in the countries concerned.

However, the explanation of security in the situation of an outbreak or continuity of violence is an issue of value judgement in relations to stake-

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holders in conflict and interested third parties. So, the question of defining what constitutes security arises at this juncture. Is security understood in the classical state-centric conception of self-preservation advocated by realists such as Hans Morgenthau? Does the definition of security transcend the classical perception of the concept? Who defines security and in what context? Ibbo Mandanza provides part of the answer to these questions in his introduction to the book titled *Peace and Security in Southern Africa*.[1] He examines important of aspects of security in military, economic, environmental, and gender perspectives as treated by other African writers.

Recent studies (Jinadu, 2000) provide more insights concerning psychocultural, economic and socio-political dimensions peace and security.[2] These studies explore fundamental social and national questions that reflect developmental disparities and the rise of ethnic nationalism in different parts of Africa. The issues raised in the work edited by Jinadu constitute the basis of crisis of the state on the continent. This trend of discussion reinforces what Hutchful (1998) saw as security hazard in many African countries. In his argument, the scholar considered governance, economic development, social control and the use of legitimate force to subjugate fellow citizens as the common factors of insecurity in Africa. It is true that these facts are very relevant to the situation we are studying in the Horn of Africa. In examining conflict and security situation in this region, there is sufficient evidence to demonstrate that governance is monopolised by ethnic or ideological oligarchies. This happens at the expense of the majority of ordinary citizens.

For example, Amharas, and Tigreans have dominated Ethiopian politics to control scarce resources at the expense of other nationalities in Ethiopia. Sudan experiences a similar political development. People who describe themselves as Arabs or Muslims depending on appropriate circumstances tend to distort political realities of the country. They control economic resources to the detriment of other nationalities in the country. A similar situation could be seen in social and political developments in Djibouti and Somalia. The groups involved in this practice are oligarchies with narrow vested interests.

The monopoly of power, scarce resources and denial of rights of others has resulted in civil wars that threaten the very existence of states in the region. The regime of Mohamed Siad Barre is another relevant example to support this statement. Studies on the disintegration of Somalia (Adibe, 1995) show that Siad Barre's totalitarian governance was responsible for the civil war that has deprived the country from a recognised political authority. Siad Barre introduced a clan system of governance that dominated economic and political life during his regime. He appointed loyalists into positions of leadership and power. The Somali National Movement emerged in

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1981 to resist authoritarianism and brutality against the deprived people. The failure of the opposition to fill the power vacuum left behind by Siad Barre after his flight into exile in 1991 marked the beginning of disintegration of Somalia. Therefore, observers of political development in the region will realise that armed resistance movements always threaten state security.

Consequently, conflicts in the Horn of Africa are geared towards adjustment of chronic injustices and in extreme cases armed movements tend to privilege the creation of new states in which they believe justice would be made to prevail. Extreme considerations emanate from the behaviour of governing oligarchies that would like to perpetuate the privileged status of their respective members. It must be noted that conflicts arising from this situation tend to escalate leading to bloody civil wars. Parties maintain their respective positions on issues that divide them while drawing support from interested civilian groups.

In short, relational explanation of conflict and the state security provides an overview of causal relationships. Relational treatment of the subject brings to light a set of concepts that would contribute to knowledge about similarities and differences between in the nature of conflicts in countries of the Horn of Africa. The relational approach transcends, nevertheless, issues of similarities and differences to touch characteristics of the conflicts that rage a number of countries in this region.

Revisiting Conflict Situation in the Region

The Horn is an expanding region that includes Kenya, Sudan, and Uganda, through belonging to Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD). Originally, the Horn was composed of Djibouti, Ethiopia and Somalia. The latter shared severe droughts and desertification in 1980s with their neighbours in Kenya, Sudan and Uganda. Shared effects of environmental degradation caused by climatic changes led the six countries to sign the agreement that established Inter-Governmental Authority on Drought and Desertification (IGADD) in 1986. Ethiopia and Sudan had civil wars at the time of the signature of this agreement. The Lord's Resistance Army was about to emerge and Somalia was heading towards disintegration. Subsequent intertwined conflicts involving most of the IGAD member states gave rise to the expression of 'greater Horn' (Lund & Betts, 1999:120–125). Conflicts and natural disasters have contributed to the emergence of a larger Horn of Africa than at independence. This is the fact generating issues related to security uncertainty and the fate or role of civilians in armed violence.

Conflicts in the region provide common characteristics. Most of them have their roots in economic underdevelopment, environmental hazards, repressive political systems, and competition over natural resources and external linkages. Patterns of conflict dynamics differ in nature. The region

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has the experience of inter-state conflicts. The war between Ethiopia and Somalia in 1978 over Ogaden remains in our memory (Chege, 1987: 91), but the freshest one is the Eritrean-Ethiopian border war that started in 1998 (Beurden, 1999: 135–136). Intra-state conflicts are abundant with cross-border connections. The numerous opposition movements that have armed wings in Eritrea, Ethiopia and Sudan justify this. Somalia is well known for the proliferation of clan allied armed groups (Adibe, 1995: 5–18). Civilians form the core of these pseudo military organisations.

Types of governments in the Horn of Africa and the end of the superpower rivalry in the region are the starting points to explain the proliferation of opposition political movements. Most governments in the region had attempted to impose national unity without making provisions for cultural diversities. This was the case of Ethiopia before the Zenawi regime and of Sudan before it incorporated a provision on self-determination into her constitution. Others such as Somalia opted for irredentism. The latter gave rise to the emergence of Somali nationalist movements in Djibouti, Ethiopia and

Table 1 Opposition Movements with Armed Wings in 1990s

Country	Movements
Eritrea	Eritrean Jihad Movement (EJM) Eritrean National Forces Alliance (ENFA)
Ethiopia	Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF) Oromo Liberation Front (OLF)
Somalia	Somali National Alliance (SNA) Somali Salvation Democratic Front (SSDF) Somali Peoples Movement (SPM) Somali Salvation National Movement (SSNM) Somali Democratic Movement (SDM) Somali National Democratic Union (SNDU) Somali National Front (SNF)
Sudan	Sudan Peoples Liberation Movement (SPLM) Sudan Peoples Liberation Movement-United (SPLM-U) South Sudan Independent Movement (SSIM) National Democratic Alliance (NDA)
Uganda	Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) West Nile Bank Front (WNBF) Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) Uganda Salvation Front (USF) Uganda Muslims Salvation Front (UMSF) National Army for the Liberation of Uganda (NALU)

Source: Extracts from Monique Mekenkamp et al. (1999) and from Clement Adibe (1995) Table 1.2, pp. 10–13.

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Kenya. For this reason, many opposition movements chose the path of armed resistance. The sample of opposition movements in Table 1 provides the seriousness of the problem. The end of the superpower rivalry left power vacuum in the Horn. Regional powers wanted to step in to enlarge their cultural influence beyond their national boundaries.[3] The pursuit of this kind national interest necessitated that they encourage the creation of dissident movements across the border.

A more satisfactory approach to understanding the nature of the problem is to make an exploration of the various and controversial political movements that have emerged in the region. Table 1 shows that there are 22 or more armed opposition movements in five countries of the Horn. Political goals of these armed opposition movements rotate around the idea of social change that should guarantee democracy, equity, peace and justice. However, resistance of governments to accept social realities and demands of opposition groups often degenerate into crises, violence and civil wars. The cases of Siad Barre, Mengistu and Nimeiri governments are recent examples of negligence of political demands that helps the emergence of armed resistance movements in the Horn of Africa.

The most disturbing aspect of this proliferation of armed political movements is that they target the civilian population for recruitment. People called upon to join in opposing governments have not been previously exposed to military training. Those who resist against forced recruitment are intimidated into accepting it in order to survive. There are many examples to illustrate this point. One example is the issue of abduction of children and women by the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) in Uganda. The abducted people are compelled to join the ranks and file of this armed group against their will. The LRA force abducted girls into marriage. The majority of the children and people abducted remain in captivity as fighting forces, porters and 'wives'. This swells the number of civilians who learn new skills of violence. The story does not end there. Governments feel the pinch of armed action of the movements when they become operational. In response, governments design counter-insurgency strategies. These strategies necessitate the recruitment of civilians into irregular forces such as government-backed militias. In addition, the phenomenon of second tier grassroots involvement comes into picture. We shall find later that some communities take the advantage of availability of small arms to establish parallel community military formations with the aim of acquiring property of others by force. The result is that civilians are forced into the circuit of armed violence.

Much is known about conflicts in the Horn of Africa, but there is a need to emphasise the factors that nurture the participation civilians in devastating conflicts. Economic and political marginalisation of outlying regions

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constitutes one-factor indiginating categories of communities in many countries. Government policies determine survival of people. Economic welfare is the function of those who control power. Thus, governments tend to ignore popular demands for basic services thereby closing avenues for continuous dialogue with their respective communities. Action to rectify the situation takes a violent form. This leads affected civilians to yield to the call of rebellious groups who advocate the use of force as the only available option. These issues of bad governance condition trends of civil strife in many countries of the Horn.

Another factor is cross-border ethnic composition of countries of the Horn. Ethnic relationships play an important role in internationalising conflicts in the region. Present state boundaries cut across several ethnic groups. For example, the Beja group are citizens of Eritrea and Sudan. Anuaks and Nuers are on both sides of the Ethiopian-Sudanese border. The Acholi, Madi, Kakwa and Kaliko are separated by the international boundary between Sudan and Uganda. Certainly, the Somali ethnic groups living in the Ogaden were the cause of the Ethiopian-Somali war in 1970s. This ethnic group is the constant source of tension between Ethiopia and Somalia. Conflicts in these countries involving one ethnic group generate sympathy in the other. This situation provides internal-external linkages drawing ethnic mercenaries in civil wars.

Security Threats and Civilian Participation

Security is at the centre of different forms of militarization of civilians in conflicts that rage in the Horn of Africa. This hypothesis requires that there should be an acceptable definition of the term "security". Its definition is subject to controversies. Security is too elastic to define. Definitions depend on who defines the concept. As a way of avoiding traps of definitions, we console ourselves with the opinion of some social scientists (Ohlson, 1996:4–7) that security concerns the protection of fundamental values of actors in a given society. People regard security as economic, political, social and military imperatives. Contemporary understanding of security is shifting away from the realist approach that had to do mostly with military threats from external powers.

Countries in the Horn are under threat from disillusions of large sections of their own societies. Political exclusion, economic marginalization, and social discrimination threaten the security of citizens to the extent that they regard the state as the primary threat to their survival. The intensity of the situation we have described above leads to desperate attempts of the affected citizens to take law into their own hands as a means of safeguarding their fundamental values from the threat of unacceptable government policies. People who believe that the government no longer represents their

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best interest seek by all means to overthrow it or establish an alternative state. The decline of the role of state as guarantor of protection and human security is serious in the region. Thus, countries in the Horn of Africa are more vulnerable to internal insecurity than from neighbouring countries as it appears on the surface. The complexity of self-defence by ethnic groups, social classes and intra-state regions impact seriously on civilian militarization in confrontations between states and armed political movements.

Governments hold contrary perceptions about dissident groups that indulge in armed opposition movements. They are dismissive of the groups before they develop into full-fledged parallel armies. In Sudan and Uganda, the Sudan Peoples Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A) and the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) were respectively considered to be gangs of bandits that would be crushed soon. Instead, they grew into a credible force to reckon with after passage of time. However, cases of the Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF) and the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) were different. Eritrean and Ethiopian governments were partners in arms against Ethiopian regimes. So, they know each other fairly well. The real problem we are explaining here is that when armed opposition movements grow in strength, they are considered by governments as the creation of other states. Table 2 shows how neighbouring countries in the Horn indulge in fomenting and supporting armed movements.

Patterns of destabilisation are the product of the inability of governments to control rebel movements. As mentioned above, governments deny the existence of internal problems. They overlook real problems that would have been negotiated at infant stage and resolved to the satisfaction of the government and the other party to the conflict. Once prospects for early settlement of a dispute evaporate and when a rebel movement mounts formidable pressure on a government, it throws the responsibility on a neighbour

Table 2 Patterns of Destabilisation and Militarization (at different times)

Countries in Conflict	Opposition Movement	Active Support from
Sudan – Eritrea	SPLM & NDA EJM & ENFA	Eritrea Sudan
Sudan – Ethiopia	ONLF & OLF SPLM	Sudan Ethiopia
Sudan – Uganda	LRA & WNBF SPLM	Sudan Uganda
Eritrea – Ethiopia	ENFA ONLF & OLF	Ethiopia Eritrea

Source: Compiled by the author.

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or a foreign state. We selected four countries in the Horn to demonstrate how they are involved in each other's armed conflict.

What actions do states take to maintain their security in face with of growing insecurity caused by armed opposition movements? How do they react? What impact do their actions have civilians populations? Answers to these questions have a bearing on the militarization of considerable sections of populations. This will be explained later. But the immediate thing to do is to look at Table 2 again. It will be noticed that armed conflicts in Eritrea, Ethiopia, Sudan and Uganda draw these countries into their circuit at different times and under different situations. For the sake of simplicity, it would be more convenient to examine relationships between two countries as far as patterns of destabilisation are concerned. At times, three countries are involved in providing support to armed movement in one country. If the table is examined carefully, one will notice that Sudan is central to processes of destabilisation in the region. Let us look at the problem in bilateral perspectives.

Sudan versus Eritrea

There are four armed opposition movements that contribute to controversies between the two countries. The SPLM and the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) are Sudanese movements based in Eritrea. Eritrean Jihad Movement (EJM) and the Eritrean National Forces Alliance (ENFA) were fomented by Ethiopia and Sudan at different times according to development of new events. For example, Assefa (1998) argues that ENFA is the creation of Ethiopia and the Sudan to weaken Eritrea after the outbreak of hostilities in 1998. Complaints from the Government of Sudan continue to be directed against Eritrea concerning activities of the NDA and the SPLM in eastern Sudan.

Sudan versus Ethiopia

As mentioned earlier, the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF) and the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) are veteran opposition movements in Ethiopia. They hibernate and return to activity depending on events in the region. The SPLM was born in Sudan with active support of Ethiopia in 1980s. It was expelled after the fall of Mengistu Haile Mariam in 1991. Relations deteriorated between Ethiopia and Sudan when there was an assassination attempt against the life of President Hosni Mubarak in 1995. Sudan blamed Ethiopia for all SPLA military gains along the common borders. Then authorities in Khartoum encouraged OLF to be active inside Ethiopia.

Sudan versus Uganda

These countries have a long history of mutual accusation regarding support of each other's armed opposition movements. The SPLM is the dominant

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armed movement, which has Ugandan connection since it was dislodged from Ethiopia in 1991. Opposition from a host of armed movements faces the Government of Uganda. However, the most important interconnected actors are the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) and the West Nile Bank Front. Uganda accuses the Sudan of providing military and logistic support these movements. Equally important, Sudanese have always maintained the position that they already defeated the SPLA in Equatoria.[4] The remaining fighting forces in those parts of the Sudan are Ugandan armed forces. What is important about the interconnectedness of the armed conflict is that both countries admit their relationships with each other's rebels.

Eritrea versus Ethiopia

Destabilisation is a new phenomenon between the two countries. The regimes in Ethiopia and Eritrea are the product of alliance between rebel movements to overthrow the dictatorial regime of Mengistu Haile Mariam. Ethiopia was partitioned by a mutual consent of the new rebel governments. Bilateral relations were normal between the two countries until border war broke out in 1998. It is after this period that the warring neighbours sought alliance with the Sudan and perhaps other neighbours to destabilise each other. Documented sources (Assefa, 1998) indicate that Eritrea urged the OLF and ONLF to accelerate armed action against Ethiopia. In return, Ethiopia, in collaboration with Sudan, played an active role in the creation of the ENFA to weaken Eritrea.

This pattern of destabilisation is similar in the relationships between Ethiopia and Somalia. There are reports of frequent intervention of Ethiopian troops in Somalia in support of either friendly clan militia or in pursuit of the ONLF. It would have been logical to treat Ethiopian-Somali aspects of security threats, but we chose to examine cases that are interconnected with the situation of Sudan. It is worth recognising that conflicts in the Horn of Africa affect national sovereignty and integrity of the Sudan more than other states in the region with exception of Somalia. The fear is that its neighbour, Ethiopia disintegrated and Eritrea became a sovereign state. In a similar situation, Somalia is on the verge of disintegration if non-state entities such as Somaliland and Puntland gain recognition.

The SPLM/A is a thorn in the pattern of interactions examined above. Sudanese political leaders suspect that their neighbours are preparing ground for the secession of South Sudan. Their major worry is that the demand for self-determination that is echoed in capital cities of neighbouring countries constitutes conspiracy to break Sudan into pieces. Postcolonial governments in Sudan have directed economic development towards specific areas leaving the south, the east and the west of the country in a serious state of backwardness. These areas are referred to as marginal regions.

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Armed resistance had developed in south Sudan before the country became independent in 1956. In the process of resistance the armed opposition in south Sudan forged alliance with disgruntled groups in marginal regions. The ruling classes in Khartoum regard this situation as a dangerous development for the unity of the country.

The IGAD Committee mediating Sudan's conflict proposed self-determination in its declaration of principles (DOP), which was accepted both by the government and the SPLA. Sudan still considers the DOP as ominous gesture orchestrated by Eritrea, Ethiopia and Uganda with the support of the western countries formerly known as IGAD Friends. It is a general concern in this country that if south Sudan secedes, other marginal areas of north Sudan may follow suit. The inclusion of a provision on self-determination in the Sudanese constitution does not seem to dispel fears of the North about possible secession of South Sudan. That is why it is important to examine how Sudanese war policies exacerbate militarization of civilians.

Thus, inter-state tensions in the Horn of Africa constitute a major exacerbation of arms flow, which intensify militarization. The amount of weapons that infiltrate the countries involved in revenge support for armed opposition movements encourage communities to arm themselves for purposes other than that of the civil wars on the ground. Researchers (Berman & Sams, 2000: 16–21) identify similar problems of interwoven conflict that leaves small arms unchecked within state boundaries or across common borders. Certain communities or groups take advantage of the chaos to arm in order to face different situations. This is a real issue in countries such as Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, Sudan and Uganda.

With exception of Kenya, the other countries in the region cannot check the movement of small arms because they are unable to control fully territories where armed movements are entrenched. In Kenya where there are no recognised political armed groups, causalities of armed violence are recorded. This is attributed to the circulation of small arms acquired from actors in civil wars across the borders with Ethiopia Somalia, Sudan and Uganda. Civilian militarization will come into picture when we examine how small arms serve as instruments of earning livelihood in communities.

All what we have discussed under this section compel parties (governments and rebel movements) to conflicts in the Horn of Africa to achieve their objectives. The curious thing with the way they wage their wars is that parties to conflicts adopt the zero-sum approach in the pursuit of interests. Governments expand size of the army; promote self-defence units or militia to persecute the war on their behalf. Also, they go as far as training dissidents who are nationals of perceived enemy states. On the other hand, when rebel movements replenish their military stockpile with new supply of weapons they seek to increase their human resources. Both ways, parties

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to armed conflict engage in recruitment of civilians through persuasion or the use of force. But the real problem arises when parties to conflict lose control over the weapons at their disposal. Undisciplined groups step in to acquire weapons and use them for criminal activities.

Communal Militarization and Insecurity

One important aspect of politically induced conflicts in the Horn of Africa is that their boundaries with communal conflicts are thin. There are many linkages between internal armed conflicts and inter-state wars on one hand and the prevalence of banditry on the other. The region has a long history of cattle rustling and other forms of armed robbery. The armed conflicts have transformed the nature of inter-communal cattle rustling operations into militarized campaigns within and beyond national boundaries. Table 3 illustrates complexity of the problem involving nearly all the countries in the Horn. Cattle rustling, highway banditry and communal vengeance have not only increased within the past decade, but also resulted in heavy casualties than in the past. The reason is that elements of communities have easy access to modern weapons. They receive training from rebel movements or members of their communities purged from national armies for political reasons; and main parties to a conflict sometimes exploit them.

The phenomenon of communal militarization has a number of linkages with civil wars and inter-state wars. These wars replenish community warriors and bandits with large amounts of small arms. The spillover of such weapons complicates social stability in countries that do not experience any

Table 3 National and Transboundary Armed Cattle Rustling

Country	Community/clusters	Targeted areas of raids
Ethiopia	Koroma Nyangatom	North-eastern Kenya South-eastern Sudan
Kenya	Marakwet Turkana Sabiny	North-eastern Uganda Southern Ethiopia South-eastern Sudan
Sudan	Boya Didinga Toposa Murle	Northern Kenya North-eastern Kenya North-eastern Uganda Southern Ethiopia
Uganda	Karamajong Dodoth Jie	Northern Kenya South-eastern Sudan North-eastern Kenya Kenyan Rift Valley

Source: Compiled by the author and from interview with Professor Angelo Lobale Loiria belonging to the Toposa group in Sudan.

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form of civil strife. This is the situation of Kenya in the Horn of Africa. It has to be admitted that cattle rustling and banditry have transnational consequences in Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, Sudan and Uganda. The logical thing to do here is to refer again to table 3, in which we can identify the transnational interactive groups that raid other cattle owning communities across national borders. Readers will notice that concentration of communities involved in cattle rustling inhabit territories where the national boundaries of Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, Sudan and Uganda are common to each other respectively.

In Ethiopia, the Koroma and the Nyangatom interact with the Turkana in Kenya, the Toposa in Sudan, and the Karamajong and the Dodoth in Uganda. The Pokot and Marakwet in Kenya raid cattle of communities in northeastern Uganda and southeastern Sudan. It is not easy to describe all the linear directions and processes of cattle raiding among the communities mentioned in Table 3. Patterns of raiding operations of the communities are complex. The column under the title "target of cattle raids" explains patterns of raiding campaigns of the communities concerned. It is a network that has existed for centuries. The colonial powers could not settle the problem. The communities involved in this type communal violence do rarely recognise the national boundaries, nor do they have the sense of doing harm to others when cattle rustling is concerned.

Nevertheless, Table 3 can easily mislead people who are not familiar with the pattern of conflict and insecurity in the Horn of Africa. This situation is not the creation of the governments. As mentioned above, cattle raid is the culture of the communities in this part of the Horn. People used to handle traditional weapons in processes of cattle raiding. What has changed is the shift from the use of traditional weapons to the use of modern assault rifles and submachine guns thereby increasing human casualties. Lack of control of modern weaponry and indiscipline in ranks of national armies as well as in rebel movements exacerbates the process of community militarization, especially among cattle rustlers.

People could also be led to believe that cattle rustling and banditry are solely a transnational business. They create internal insecurity. Armed groups do train well in the use of weapons and in military tactics before launch operations. Kenya experiences serious insecurity due to the use of modern weapon in communal violence. Observers of Kenyan conflicts (Beurden, 1999: 147) show that the alliance of Kalenjin, Samburu and Pokot attacked the Kikuyu in the Rift Valley Province in 1997 inflicting heavy casualties. Similar armed actions take place in the North-eastern Province where Somali bandits (shifta) undertake highway robberies and cattle rustling.

Cattle rustling and banditry are familiar events of insecurity in Sudan as well. In addition to the ethnic groups mentioned in Table 3, there are other communities that are involved in such practices. The Murle, the Nuer, the

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Mandari in Southern Sudan and the *Muraheleen* militia from the Miseriya and the Rezeigat Arab tribes in Western Sudan militarize in order to effect intercommunal raids for cattle and for abduction of children and women.[5] The Darfur region and Eastern Sudan are famous for armed robbery. Armed robberies take place on roads and in cities where vehicle passengers and banks are the victims. These activities are relatively new in Sudan. The availability of modern weapons left behind by internal armed conflict and the wars in Eritrea, Chad and Ethiopia are agents of civilian militarization in countries of the Horn of Africa.

The effects of armed conflict in which civilians play an active role consist of breakdown of community structures and institutions. There are new sources of authority of where warlords replace the traditional leaders because they have weapons. Disruption of family life is the common feature of insecurity in the Horn of Africa. This situation leaves psycho-social effects on the population such as trauma in abducted children and women. Civilian militarization entails risks of child conscription, increased sexual vulnerability of girls and women, increased hatred and vengeance and loss of hope.

Mechanisms of Militarizing Civilians

There are inevitable relationships between armed conflicts, being them internal or interstate, and civilian handling of weapons. Weapons get into the hands of civilians through intentions of parties to armed conflicts to seek allies who could help in persecuting war or interested community members join armed movements deliberately to have access to weapons. In the latter case, they defect into wilderness with arms that would be used later for purposes of looting property such as cattle and other forms of banditry. It is necessary, at this juncture, to probe into specific mechanisms with relevant examples.

The first mechanism is deliberate involvement of civilian groups to persecute war for the main parties to a conflict. Governments and rebels are overwhelmed by logistic difficulties in maintaining security over territories under their control. Hence, they call civilians to defend themselves against the other. Establishing militia forces responds to this situation. Sufficient evidences abound when we look at the case of Sudan.

For example, the Government of Sudan and southern-based rebel movements organised allied-armed tribal militia to help in maintaining security and self-defence. This has a long history dating back to 1960s when the government launched civilian national guards (*Haras al-watan*), and the Anyanya movement created civilian armed groups that they referred to as *scouts*. But the current civil war has given rise to several tribal self-defence groups. There are the Arab, Dinka, Fertit, Mandari, Murle Nuer and the Toposa militias among others.[6] Most of militia formations are politically induced.

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Another mechanism consists of margilisation established military institutions. Revolutionary governments tend to doubt the allegiance of the existing military officers and men.[7] Undesirable elements are weeded out of the army through intensive purges. Ethiopia and Sudan underwent sweeping changes in the army after the changes of 1989 and 1991 respectively. The fleeing Mengistu forces left substantial quantities of weapons that fell into the hands of various armed groups in Somalia, Sudan and Kenya. In Sudan, such changes led to the establishment of armed wings of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) in Eastern Sudan. This political formation has contributed to civilian recruitment in addition to the existing masses of militia created in South Sudan and Western Sudan before the government of President al-Bashir assumed power in 1989.

Inter-state deliberate destabilisation action is the third mechanism of drawing civilians into a situation of armed conflict. This method emanates from security uncertainties and mutual urge to weaken the other as a preventive measure against disintegration or collapse of government. Hence, states involve in conspiracies with the intention of promoting insurgency in the territories of their rivals. In the process of doing this they host potential power-seekers that are ready to mobilise disgruntled military officers to train a civilian following for combat activities. This practice is common in the Horn of Africa. It has been mentioned earlier that Ethiopia connived with Sudan to create the ENFA so that it could weaken Eritrea in the 1998 war.

Fourthly, disintegration and indiscipline in the ranks of rebel movements represent a mechanism for civilian militarization. Many armed political movements experience schism within their organisations. This situation results in splits, massive recruitment of new fighters, who are usually civilians and bloodshed ensues. The Eritrean liberation movements underwent this process before the country seceded from Ethiopia in 1991. The current cases are Somali National Alliance and the Sudan Peoples Liberation Movement. The quarrel between Hussein Aideed and Ali Mahdi over the succession of Siad Barre resulted in the split SDA. This led to the proliferation of political movements with armed wings. There was a split in the ranks of the SPLA in 1991. The main faction remained under the command of John Garang while Riek Machar led the breakaway faction. In both cases, disagreement over ideologies or leadership called for the proliferation of rival armed organisations as shown in Table 1 above. Such organisations appeal to members of their respective ethnic groups for political support and recruitment. In desperate situation children and women are integrated into paramilitary structures. Thus, more civilians are involved in armed conflict.

Fifthly, illicit arms trade in war zones is a serious threat to state and community security. This type of business is widespread in the Horn of Africa. Kenya has complained that the amount of weapons in the hands of cattle

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rustlers is far greater than that in Kenyan police arsenals. This is true of other countries in the region. Recent studies (Gore, 2000: 14–22) on the Nuer inter-communal conflict in South Sudan indicate that the proliferation of arms encouraged the establishment of private military units in Upper Nile. The split in the SPLA led Nuer chiefs to create their self-defence units known as the white army (*Jiech Mabor*). This strange army received its military hardware through exchange of cattle for weapons. The white army became an effective civilian military institution the warring parties to the Sudan conflict had to reckon with. Subsequently, each of these parties had to lure the white army on its side by supplying more sophisticated weapons. According to the study, there are approximately 77,000 Nuer civilians under arms in the white army. These armed civilians are directly responsible to traditional chiefs through their commanders. Some of these commanders become unruly vassals to the extent of usurping powers of chiefs, thus creating the breakdown of traditional authority.

There may be many other mechanisms of civilian militarization in the Horn of Africa. This is an issue that depends on causes of conflict and cultures of the people in areas of conflict. Methods of putting civilians under arms involve governments, armed opposition movements, community interest groups and criminal groups. What has been described above represents cases that are familiar in the Sudanese context. Certainly, mechanisms such as abduction of young people are responsible for civilian participation in armed movements. This is true of the action of the Lord's Resistance Army in forced child recruitment into the rebel formations and abduction of girls in northern Uganda to be forced into sexual exploitation.

Prospects for addressing the Problem

The phenomenon of civilian militarization requires an analysis within the framework of security and the problem of synchronised armed conflict in the Horn of Africa. The persisting question is how can this phenomenon be put under control? Armed conflict is the direct factor that contributes to the involvement of various civilian groups in the knowledge and the use of deadly modern weapons for purposes other than fighting wars originating from main political conflicts. Perhaps the answer to this question may lie in examining causal effects and the pursuit of security interests by governments, armed opposition movements, affected communities and gangs.

Armed conflict nurtures insecurity in many countries. The participation of civilians has developed into the establishment of organisations that parallel the army and other official organised forces in many ways. Rebel armies, militias and gangs of cattle rustlers or robbers behave more or less like the military in areas where governments have lost control over parts of their territories. Besides adult males, children and women are increasingly

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participating in politically induced combat activities while others become members of criminal gangs. Recent research findings (El Obeid, 2001:11) show that police recorded small arms crimes in gender and age perspectives in Darfur region of the Sudan. In a total of 59,076 small arms crimes, females committed 13,981 while children committed 4,757 crimes. These figures represent 23.5% and 8% respectively.

This does not suggest that Sudan represents the worst case of civilian militarization in the Horn of Africa. The author may not have access to basic statistics in other countries of the region. There are similar cases in Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda. The real problem facing researchers is that armed communities do not reveal the exact number of their members for many reasons. But the main reason is that there is fear of governments and other rival armed groups knowing the numerical strength and firepower. This is one of the serious constraints facing researchers attempting to quantify the dimension of the problem. Countries in the Horn of Africa are living with this threat of active participation of civilians in different forms of armed activities. It is an issue that is being addressed without foreseeable solutions.

Conflict relationships are so interconnected that solutions have to be sought at various levels. The regional approach to resolve conflicts would have been a better alternative to combat civilian militarization. Unfortunately, countries of the Horn tend to emphasise on differences. The Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) has not been able to forge cohesion among its member states. Many differences between member states add to complexities of issues such as civil wars, cattle rustling and armed robbery. Governments seem to be more concerned with their own security at the expense of community security or harmony between important interest groups.

Given the devastation of communal conflicts, in which civilians use small arms, governments need to create transnational mechanisms to contain incidences through community education. This can be achieved through provision of educational opportunities and other social services. If we map out areas of cattle rustling and armed robbery, it will be noticed that these activities prevail in locations that are subject to prolonged neglect. This is the situation of South Ethiopia, Northern Kenya, Southeast Sudan and Northeast Uganda. This approach calls for a multilateral forum that would foster concerted efforts towards national and community reconciliation. It implies also that peace-building activities and confidence building should be the core in the settlement of accumulated grudges between and within civilian populations.

The national approach to the problem of conflict and insecurity needs a fundamental change in vision and attitude of parties to a conflict. National

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governments and rebel movements engage in conflicts without seeking channels of reconciliation. They should retreat from the conservative position of zero-sum game in domestic conflicts. This is the situation that leads them to exploit frustrated civilians who do the fighting for the main parties to a conflict.

Both Somalia and Sudan make an intensive use of war by proxy in which civilian participation is high. In Sudan, the Popular Defence Force (PDP), Friendly Forces (FF) splinter groups from the Nasir faction of the SPLA and other militia forces are fighting for the government. Opposition publications (Sudan Democratic Gazette, 2000: 2) indicate that Dinka militias known as *Titweng* operate with support of the SPLA against the Muraheleen Arab militia in Bahr el Ghazal. This is where interested third parties who would like to see the decline in the militarization of civilians should intervene to persuade governments and rebels minimise recruitment of civilians into their fighting forces.

Solutions to the problem of arming civilians need to be given serious attention by national governments. They are the real keys to the solution if national policies are geared towards national reconciliation and dialogue with armed opposition movements. Demobilisation of ex-combatants should accompany comprehensive peace efforts, disarmament of civilians, provision of services for lifestyle conversion of armed groups and the establishment of rule of law. It means that governments have to promote sustainable peacebuilding actions among communities inside national boundaries.

Conclusion

Reactions to conflict and insecurity have devastating effects on national communities in the Horn of Africa. Both governments and armed opposition groups contribute effectively to the increasing levels of destruction. Interests developed by other groups such as cattle rustlers and criminal gangs exacerbate the agony of innocent civilians caught in the situation of armed conflict. Hence, the collapse or deterioration of basic services is widespread in the region. The prevalence of insecurity results in shortages of basic needs and high financial and opportunity costs for goods and services.

Regional approaches do not seem to be yielding the desired peace for coexistence of states, nor do they provide a foreseeable hope for the victims. Displacement and relocation of populations tend to increase. New conflicts such as that between Ethiopia and Eritrea increase the phenomenon of internally displaced people and refugees across the region. The regional approach to the issue of conflict and insecurity should not be seen as an alternative to national and grassroots peace approaches. Other mechanisms should be sought where armed opposition movements and secondary disruptive forces should be addressed through dialogue and negotiations. The

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responsibility of seeking peaceful settlement of interstate and internal conflicts remains mainly with states. They need to promote dialogue between themselves on the one hand and between them with disgruntled communities within national boundaries on the other.

The international community is concerned with the appalling situation of unarmed civilians in the Horn of Africa. The UNDP, UNICEF and other UN Specialised Agencies seek to promote peace in the region. The most conspicuous is their role in Sudan (UNDP Khartoum, 2001). They are injecting peace in humanitarian and development works especially in areas affected or are at risk of violent communal interactions. However, international organisations have their limitations in the management of conflicts. Their mandates do not always enable them to intervene directly in armed conflicts except on humanitarian grounds. International organisations attempt to influence parties to conflicts of the region through pressure or inducement to develop communities with both government and rebel support. They have lived with armed conflicts in Somalia and Sudan without altering considerably trends of conflict there. Other organisations give up for various reasons and leave misery behind them.

But are national governments and armed opposition movements able to engage in genuine dialogues that would lead to durable and honoured agreements? Lack of confidence prevails in the attitude of stakeholders in transforming conflict into peace. This short answer leaves us in suspense. It is at this point that scholars, policy makers and diplomats should begin to address the endemic conflicts of the region. The behaviour of parties to conflicts demonstrates obstinate resistance to change dominated by security uncertainty. Whatever intervention may be there to promote peaceful settlement of disputes depends on national governments and armed opposition movements. In short, it must be admitted that much remains to be done in order to curb the generalised levels of violence in the Horn of Africa.

Notes

* This is a revised form of the paper presented at the Thirteenth Biennial Congress of the African Association of Political Science held in Yaounde, Cameroon.

1 Mandanza's explanation derives from treatment of the subject matter of peace and security developed by Thomas Ohlson and Winnie Wanzala. Their perceptions of security have been adapted to the geo-political realities of the Horn of Africa where internal and external dimensions of security give rise to turmoil within and beyond national boundaries.

2 Most of the contributors have sharpened our knowledge about different dimensions of security. However, the study of Mike Oquaye on "Culture, Conflict and Traditional Authority" is an important prologue to the issues of ethnonationalism, social and national questions expounded by Lumumba-Kasongo and Kola

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Olufemi respectively. Their ideas reveal attributes of security in conflict areas that are relevant to the study we have undertaken.

3 Neighbours of Sudan have accused her of fomenting Islamic fundamentalism in their territories. This has been mentioned by Uganda and Eritrea in relation to activities of Uganda Muslim Salvation Front (UMSF) and Eritrean Jihad Movement (EJM). See Table 1 of this study.

4 This is the most southerly region of Sudan. It has common borders with Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Central African Republic (CAR). Most of these borders are controlled by the SPLA.

5 'Muraheleen' is a Misseriya Arab (nomads) word for young people who take herds for grazing in pastures away from camps. They were transformed into an armed tribal militia during the government of Jaafar Nimeiri in the 1980s. The regime of Omer al-Bashir incorporated them into the army after 1989. They devastate Dinka communities in Bahr el Ghazal region. Now, the Muraheleen are no longer members of the Misseriya alone, but include elements of the other Arab nomadic tribes such as the Rezeigat. See Human Rights Watch 1999, *Famine in Sudan 1998: The Human Rights Causes,* New York pp. 27–29.

6 For a brief and concise description of these nationalities, see Human Rights Watch, 1999 pp. xi–xvi.

7 Other African countries have experienced this practice. For example, the Liberian government trusted the Kamajors more than the national army when President Kaba took over power after elections. In the Sudan, the Mujihadeen (Holy warriors) are paid more attention compared to the national army. The government associates victories with the Mujihadeen even when the army and other paramilitary forces participate in the combat.

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