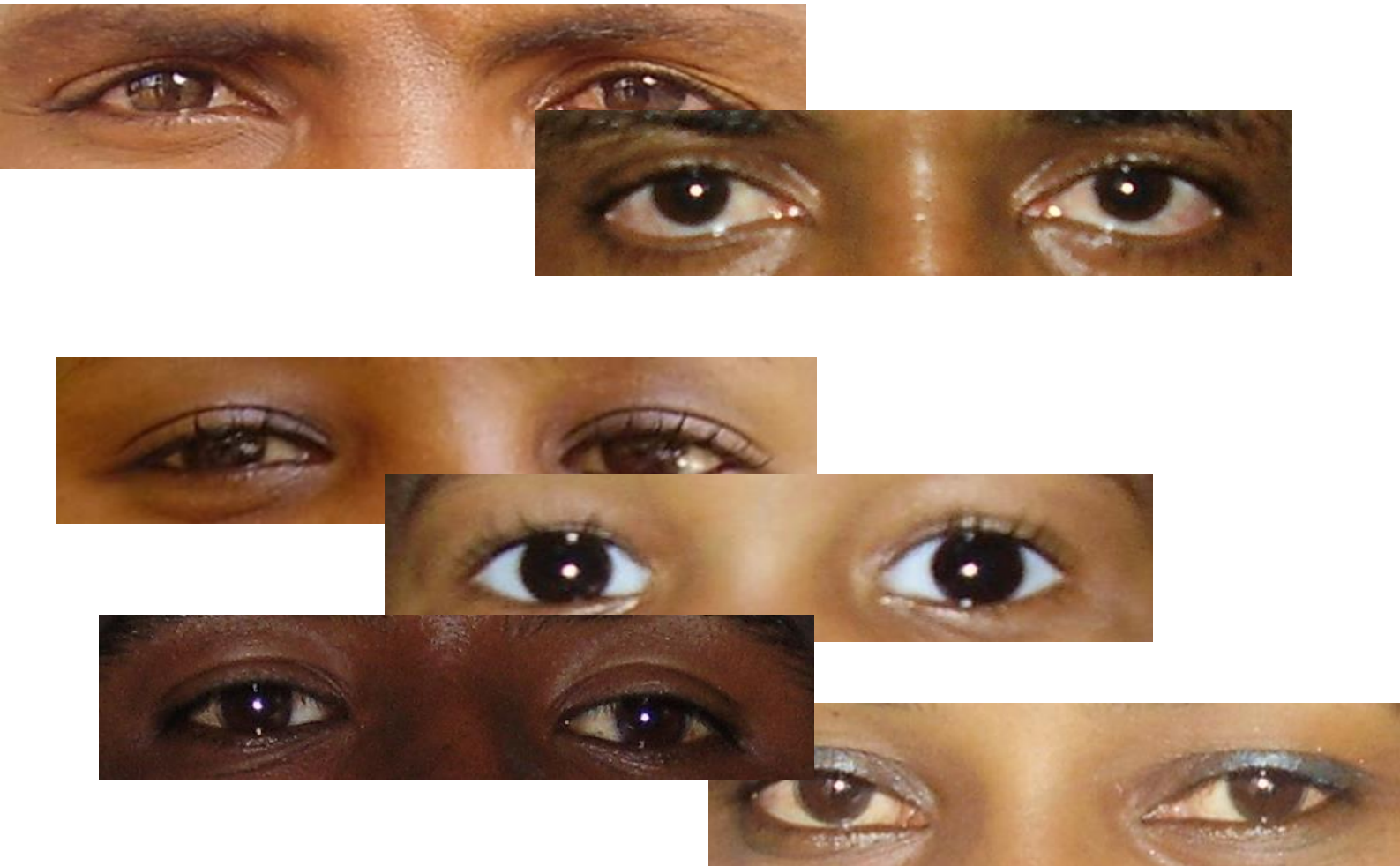


**The Horn of Africa at the Brink of the 21st Century:
Coping with Fragmentation, Isolation and
Marginalization
in a Globalizing Environment**



Edited by

Daniel R. Mekonnen and Mussie Tesfagiorgis

The Horn of Africa at the Brink of the 21st Century: Coping with Fragmentation, Isolation and Marginalization in a Globalizing Environment. Edited by Daniel R. Mekonnen and Mussie Tesfagiorgis

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The editors would like to thank all authors of the different chapters for their willingness to submit their work for this volume. We are particularly grateful for their understanding and determination to wait patiently throughout the entire editorial process, which was unbearably protracted. We all hope that by bringing together our respective chapters in this volume, we are contributing modestly in the advancement of academic discourse in matters of topical relevance to the Horn of Africa region.

We are also grateful to the valuable support we received from Wegahta K. Sereke in the preparation of the Index. We also thank the publisher of the volume, Felsberg Institute for Education and Academic Research (FIBW e.V.), and its Director Dr. Hartmut Quehl, for the support they provided in the publication of the work.

The Editors

September 2013

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION: THE HORN OF AFRICA BETWEEN ENDLESS CONFLICTS AND “COMPASSION FATIGUE”

Daniel R. Mekonnen

1.1. Introduction

This volume is a collection of papers by different authors, six of which were initially presented in two different panels of the Fourth European Conference on African Studies (ECAS4) that took place in Uppsala, Sweden, from 15 to 18 June 2011. There is one additional chapter by Bethlehem Daniel, which was not presented in none of the two conferences. This chapter provides general background information on the Horn of Africa. In addition to that, there is one introductory chapter by Daniel R. Mekonnen, as well as another concluding chapter and an annexure in the form of timeline of key events in the Horn of Africa, compiled by Mussie Tesfagioris.

As is now the tradition, ECAS is one of the biggest conferences on African studies held every two years in the European continent. The biennial conference is organised by AEGIS (African Studies in Europe), which is a network of European universities and research centres, mainly interested on African studies (www.aegis-eu.org). The overall theme of ECAS4, which is still available from the conference website, was “African Engagements: On Whose Terms?”¹

Six of the core chapters in this volume were presented in Panel 50 and Panel 102 of ECAS4. Panel 50 was co-chaired by Hartmut Quehl and Günter Schröder. Its theme was “The Horn of Africa at the Brink of the 21st Century: Coping With Fragmentation, Isolation and Marginalisation in a Globalising Environment.” Panel 102 was co-chaired by Hartmut Quehl and Mussie Tesfagioris. Its theme was “Eritrea: A Country Losing its People.” This volume contains three papers from each panel, the details of which will be elaborated at the end of this chapter. Since the theme of Panel 50 was broad enough to embrace the subject matter of

¹ See conference webpage: <http://www.nai.uu.se/ecas-4/panels/>.

Panel 102, for purposes of the current volume, the editors have taken the liberty of incorporating the theme of Panel 50 as an overarching title for the edited volume.

Ever since the conclusion of ECAS4 some of the papers in this volume have been in a constant process of gestation. It is hoped that the compilation of the papers in the present format would be helpful in disseminating the ideas and proposals reflected in the respective chapters. In keeping with the broader objective of academic writing, the editors and authors hope that the re-exposition and expansion of these ideas and proposals in the current edited volume will provide for a wider platform for their dissemination.

The aim of the current chapter is to provide a general introduction to the edited volume, by clarifying the overarching conceptual framework under which the six chapters of the volume suitably fall. To do so, the chapter will provide first a brief contextual background of the Horn of Africa region in terms of the dire state of human security and human development in the region (these being two of the most important concepts for this volume).

1.2. Of endless conflicts and “compassion fatigue”

For many decades, the Horn of Africa has been acutely deprived of “non-military solutions” to the problems that underlie the conflicts of the region. Governments of the region have always sought to solve their problems in wars, making the region unremitting bedrock of armed conflicts and all sorts of humanitarian crises associated with it. While some wars have been fought for noble causes, many of them have been fought for ignoble reasons. Wars fought to prevent unnecessary suffering and destruction may be regarded as just wars. On the other hand, there are also wars fought for reprehensible causes, such as to impose one’s ideological or religious values on other peoples. Wars fought to topple the government in a neighbouring country also fall under this category. The latter category is the type of conflict, which has persisted for several decades in many parts of the world. Conflicts of this type are very much related to proxy wars. They are fought by opposing powers using third parties as

substitutes for fighting each other directly. For example, the war Eritrea and Ethiopia fought in Somalia since 2006 is the best example in this regard.²

The armed conflicts and the proxy wars of the Horn of Africa have produced a surplus of academic literature, ranging from political science to history, international law and a diverse of other disciplines. The plethora of the academic literature in this regard is so broad that it would be impossible to do justice by trying to cite a compressive list of works in this chapter. Suffice would it be to cite here a few of the most important works.³ The conflicts of the Horn of Africa are so intricate and protracted that their spill over effect seems to have a detrimental consequence not only to the region itself but also to the international community at large, which seems to be seriously inflicted by a “compassion fatigue,” as a result of the prevailing hopelessness in the region. The expression “compassion fatigue” is borrowed from Ramesh Thakur, who, in reference to the critical and pervasive threats of humanity, says that the biggest danger our world faces is “compassion fatigue: we will get so used to [unspeakable] statistics that they will cease to shock us, and we will learn to live with the unacceptable.”⁴

Thakur’s observation has resonance with that of Richard Abel who comments on another form of exhaustion, known as “donor fatigue,” which is sometimes seen in international relief efforts. Analogizing this to the experience of South Africa under apartheid, Abel opines that “those not suffering often tire hearing about others.” In such kind of situations, “guilt turns into indifference, or even anger at having to listen” and watch atrocities. The sad part of the

² See generally, Jon Abbink, “Ethiopia-Eritrea: Proxy Wars and Prospects of Peace in the Horn of Africa,” *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 21, no. 3 (2003): 407-425; Stephanie Hanson, “Proxy War in Africa’s Horn,” available at <http://www.cfr.org/ethiopia/proxy-war-africas-horn/p12225> (accessed on 26 December 2006); Lencho Leta, *The Search for Peace: The Conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea* (Oslo: Fafo, 2007).

³ Cristian C. Teodorescu, “Proxy Warfare in the Horn of Africa: Terrorist Organization Al-Shabaab Prospering from the Chaos in the Failed State of Somalia,” *International Proceedings of Economics Development & Research*, 28 (2012): 215-220; Roba Sharamo and Berouk Mesfin (eds.), *Regional Security in the Post-Cold War Horn of Africa* (Pretoria: Institute for Security Studies, 2011); Toni Weis, “Precarious Statehood: Understanding Regional Conflict in the Horn of Africa and beyond,” *Human Security Journal*, 8 (2009): 57-72; Dominique Jacquin-Berdal and Martin Plaut, *Unfinished Business: Ethiopia and Eritrea at War* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2005); Jon Abbink, “The Eritrean-Ethiopian Border Conflict,” *African Affairs* 97 (1998), 551-564; Alex de Waal (ed.), *War in Darfur and the Search for Peace* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007); Alex de Waal, and Julie Flin, *Darfur: A Short History of a Long War* (New York: Zed Books, 2005); Alex de Waal (ed.), *Islamism and its Enemies in the Horn of Africa* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004); Alex de Waal, *Famine that Kills* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989); Ruth, Iyob, “The Ethiopian-Eritrean Conflict: Diasporic vs. Hegemonic States in the Horn of Africa, 1991-2000,” *Journal of Modern African Studies* 38, no. 4 (2000), pp. 659-682.

⁴ Ramesh Thakur, *The United Nations, Peace and Security* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 92.

“fatigue” is summed up as follows: for the other side to feel the intensity of atrocities, “new and more extreme offences must be discovered.”⁵

The validity of the above observations is clearer today in no other place than the Horn of Africa, which is described by some experts as the most conflicted region of the world. In this regard, the former US Ambassador to Ethiopia, David Shinn, particularly laments as follows:⁶

In the post-World War II era, the Horn of Africa has consistently been the most conflicted corner of the world. That is a bold assertion, but hear me out and then tell me if there is another region of the world that has consistently been more conflicted.

Others, such as Martin Plaut, may slightly disagree with the above observation, noting that although the region has always seen incessant armed conflicts, in terms of abrupt change of regimes the region has remained relatively stable for the last two decades.⁷ This does not mean, however, that the major causes of armed conflict and other forms of human suffering are fully resolved in the region. In fact, Plaut himself admits that the region is far from normalcy when he says the following in relation to Eritrea, Ethiopia and Somalia:

The current state of affairs cannot be considered permanent. Human rights abuses abound, famine continues to plague the peoples of all three countries and there are constant tensions between them. All have attempted to undermine each other. Ethiopia and Eritrea are in a state of near-conflict along their common border. Ethiopian troops are inside Somalia, attacking al-Shabab, while Eritrea is accused of putting resources behind rebel movements operating in Ethiopia and Somalia.⁸

It is perhaps due to the above observation that Plaut, at the end of his paper, notes that the Horn of Africa “has a habit of taking all observers by surprise.”⁹

It is true that there are many places in the world, which have seen repeated conflicts and man-made humanitarian crises up to this moment, such as the Democratic Republic of Congo

⁵ Richard Abel, *Politics by Other Means: Law in Struggle against Apartheid, 1980-1994* (London: Routledge, 1995), p. 532.

⁶ David Shinn, “Challenges to Peace and Stability in the Horn of Africa,” Paper presented at the World Affairs Council of Northern California, 12 March 2010.

⁷ Martin Plaut, “Briefing: How Unstable is the Horn of Africa,” *Review of African Political Economy*, 40, no. 136 (2013): 322.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 321.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 329.

(DRC). But in terms of frequency of conflicts, the Horn of Africa still remains the most conflicted region in the world. From inter-state conflicts, the 1998-2000 border conflict between Eritrea and Ethiopia is the most recent example. However, the history of intra-state conflicts dates back to the 1950s. During this time, Eritrea fought previously against Ethiopian occupation. This war was fought for thirty years, and at the time of its conclusion in 1991 it was the longest armed conflict in Africa. It was fought by Eritrean liberation fronts (against occupying Ethiopian forces) that ultimately led to the emergence of Eritrea as an independent state in 1991. Other well-known conflicts of the region include the civil wars of Sudan since the mid-1950s, including the 2003–2004 “Genocide” in Darfur, and the perennial civil wars in the failed state of Somalia. As a result, peace and security have remained the major preoccupations of the region. That is why the Horn of Africa has also remained at the centre of academic debate on conflict studies and related areas of international relations, thereby producing a plethora of academic literature in that regard.

In several accounts, the Horn of Africa also remains a region afflicted by a diverse of natural and manmade calamities. Countries of the region are known for their poor performances in key international rankings and surveys on democratic governance, human rights, human security and human development. The following examples from two widely cited sources adequately support this claim: the *Human Development Index* (HDI) by UNDP and the *Failed States Index* (FSI) by the Fund for Peace.

According to the 2013 HDI of UNDP, all countries in the region are in the category of “low human development.” Somalia and South Sudan are not surveyed in the 2013 edition of the HDI, possibly, because obtaining up-to-date data from these two countries was not easy. But the overall record of the other countries of the region shows unpromising achievements in the area of human development, with Djibouti at a rank of 164 from 186 countries, relatively scoring better than the other three countries. Sudan is ranked 171, Ethiopia 173, and Eritrea 181. Countries are generally categorised under four types of scores in the HDI: (a) very high human development, with a score of 0.905; (b) high human development, with a score of 0.758; (c) medium human development, with a score of 0.640, and (d) low human development, with a score of 0.466. All countries of the Horn of Africa that are assessed by the 2013 HDI are placed not only in the category of “low human development” but also below

the regional average for sub-Saharan Africa, which is 0.475. The group average for least development countries (LDCs), to which all countries of the Horn belong, is 0.449. Yet, the score of all countries of the region (individually and by collective average) is lower than that of the average score for LDCs, which is 0.449. Individually, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia and Sudan scored an HDI of 0.445, 0.351, 0.396, and 0.414, respectively. The combined regional average for the four countries is 0.401, which is below the regional average of sub-Saharan Africa and the group average for LDCs.¹⁰

In the area of state fragility, all countries in the Horn of Africa make part of the 25 Most Failed States on Earth.¹¹ Somalia, Sudan and South Sudan in particular appear within the five most fragile states, with Somalia widely recognised as a failed state. In the words of Plaut, Somalia appears to be the country that perfectly fits the list of indicators developed by the FSI. Plaut in particular notes that: “For the international community there is little doubt that Somalia is the epitome of the failed state.”¹²

In the FSI, countries are measured based on twelve different indicators with a score of 10 points each, creating an aggregate of 120 points. The higher a given country scores in the aggregate the more it is vulnerable to state fragility. According to the 2013 FSI, the most fragile state in the world is Somalia, with a total point of 113.9 out of 120. The most stable country is Finland with a score of 18.0 out of 120. As the third and the fourth most fragile states, Sudan and South Sudan scored 111.0 and 111.6, respectively. Far from being stable, Ethiopia and Eritrea scored 98.9 and 95.0, respectively. In terms of rank, they are 19th and 25th, respectively. They are both at the upper tier of the “warning” level, only one step behind the “alert” level. At a slightly better level (but still within the “warning” category) Djibouti scores a total of 85.5 (at a rank of 50). While there is no universally agreed definition of state fragility, the following paragraph captures the essential traits of fragile states:

¹⁰ UNDP, *Human Development Index*, 2013, available at <http://hdr.undp.org/en/reports/global/hdr2013/> (accessed 1 July 2013).

¹¹ Fund for Peace, *The Failed States Index*, 2013, available at <http://ffp.statesindex.org/rankings-2013-sortable> (accessed 15 July 2013). See also Business Insider’s “The 25 Most Failed States on Earth,” which builds on the FSI, available at <http://www.businessinsider.com/the-25-most-failed-states-on-earth-2013-6?op=1> (accessed on 15 July 2013).

¹² Plaut, note 7 above, p. 322. On page 323, Plaut seems sceptical of whether Somalia can be rightly described as a “failed state,” because according to him “Somalia is more prosperous and more governed than the international community would generally surmise.”

In order to better understand fragile states, we need to know how states become fragile in the first place. There is no internationally agreed definition of fragility but for the purposes of this paper, states are considered fragile when their government cannot or will not deliver the core functions to its people, including the poor. Our definition of fragile states focuses on weak capacity and/or lack of political will to provide services and to sustain a development partnership with the international community.¹³

The Fund for Peace (the producer of the FSI) on its part clarifies the concept of state failure as follows:

A state that is failing has several attributes. One of the most common is the loss of physical control of its territory or a monopoly on the legitimate use of force. Other attributes of state failure include the erosion of legitimate authority to make collective decisions, an inability to provide reasonable public services, and the inability to interact with other states as a full member of the international community. The 12 indicators cover a wide range of elements of the risk of state failure, such as extensive corruption and criminal behaviour, inability to collect taxes or otherwise draw on citizen support, large-scale involuntary dislocation of the population, sharp economic decline, group-based inequality, institutionalized persecution or discrimination, severe demographic pressures, brain drain, and environmental decay. States can fail at varying rates through explosion, implosion, erosion, or invasion over different time periods.¹⁴

According to Vallings and Moreno-Torres, in its simplest form, fragility refers “to ineffective states, those that cannot or will not fulfil minimal functions of government.”¹⁵ The types of “minimal functions” inherent in the definition include, among other things, the provision of security and basic services to significant portions of a given population. A country which suffers from the above chronic problems for a prolonged period of time eventually crushes to become a failed state. It is in this regard that fragility or state failure establishes a very solid link with another important concept, which is human security. As noted before, human security is one of the two important conceptual frameworks—the other being human development—in which context a number of arguments in this volume are framed.

Human security is best understood in the context of the broader debate on the link between human rights, sustainable development and human security. In this regard, the most important

¹³ Claire Vallings and Magüi Moreno-Torres, “Drivers of Fragility: What Makes States Fragile?,” DFID-PRDE Working Paper Series No. 7, April 2005.

¹⁴ Fund for Peace, “Failed States Index FAQ,” available at <http://ffp.statesindex.org/faq#5> (accessed on 8 August 2013).

¹⁵ Vallings and Moreno-Torres, note 13 above, 6.

departure point is the growing understanding that at the centre of the debate on human security, human rights and sustainable development rests the commitment of states to good governance and democratic accountability. All of these issues are directly related to the common malaises in the Horn of Africa, which include alarming levels of human suffering and pervasive levels of vulnerability and victimisation. As noted by a major policy document of the UK's Department for International Development (DFID), governments are crucial to the enabling environment for elimination of major causes of vulnerability and victimisation.¹⁶ This means that human development, human security and human rights are hardly achievable in an environment which does not favour good governance, respect for fundamental rights and democratic principles. These problems are ever challenging in fragile states, such as countries of the Horn of Africa, which are characterised by low levels of achievement, at least in the two major indicators discussed above.

1.3. Conceptual parameters¹⁷

The chapters in this volume are developed taking the above sad state of affairs in the Horn of Africa as a backdrop to the various lines of arguments developed in each chapter. While a thorough examination of the major root causes of armed conflicts and man-made calamities of the region goes beyond the objectives of this volume, some of the chapters in this work have tried to address the challenge using the theoretical framework of forced migration, which in many ways overlaps with the overarching concepts of human security and human development, which somehow serve as the umbrella concepts under which several of the themes explored in this volume rest. While the inclination of each chapter (contribution) to the above mentioned theoretical frameworks varies considerably, the concept of human security (and its concomitant concepts of human development and human rights) still serves as an overarching conceptual framework of analysis for most of the themes explored by the contributors to this volume. The concept needs a little more clarification.

¹⁶ DFID, "Better Government for Poverty Reduction: More Effective Partnerships for Change," Discussion Paper, 2003, p.1.

¹⁷ The theoretical formulation on the link between human rights, human security and human development, as used in this section, builds on my own previous work: "Drivers of Fragility and the Perils of State Failure in Eritrea." This is a paper I presented at the International Conference on "Human Security: Threats, Risks, Crisis," 18–19 October 2012, Kadir Has University, Istanbul, Turkey.

Human security is a concept that promotes the protection of “the vital core of all human lives in ways that enhance human freedoms and human fulfilment.”¹⁸ It means protecting “fundamental freedoms — freedoms that are the essence of life,” by “protecting people from critical (severe) and pervasive (widespread) threats and situations.” The concept enhances individual freedom by “using processes that build on people’s strengths and aspirations” and promoting the creation of “political, social, environmental, economic, military and cultural systems that together give people the building blocks of survival, livelihood and dignity.”¹⁹ As opposed to the traditional conception of national security, which focuses on the state, human security is concerned mainly with the security of the human person. It is at this juncture, where the link between human security, human development and human rights, can be clearly established. In order to fully understand this, we need to refer to Amartya Sen’s seminal work on the theory of development, *Development as Freedom*.

In the preface to *Development as Freedom*, Sen begins by emphasising on the following fact: “we live in a world of unprecedented opulence ... And yet we also live in a world with remarkable deprivation, destitution and oppression.”²⁰ According to Sen, these problems can only be overcome by a theory of development premised on freedom. In this sense, freedom is understood as individual agency unconstrained by lack of social, political and economic opportunities. Sen’s “development as freedom” approach underlines the identification of individual freedom as the main objective of development—by implication human security. The approach views the expansion of human freedom both as the primary end and the principal means of development. This requires “the removal of various types of *unfreedoms* that leave people with little choice and little opportunity of exercising their reasoned agency.”²¹ The approach concentrates on the roles and interconnections between certain crucial instrumental freedoms, what Sen describes as “the five distinct types of freedom”:

¹⁸ *Human Security Now: Protecting and Empowering People*, Report of the Commission on Human Security, 2003, 4. The first international document, which provided a definition of human security, is the 1994 UNDP *Human Development Report*. On page 22, the report says: “The concept of security has too far been interpreted narrowly: as security of territory from external aggression, or as protection of national interests in foreign policy or as global security from the threat of nuclear holocaust ... Forgotten were the legitimate concerns of ordinary people who sought security in their daily lives.”

¹⁹ *Human Security Now*, note 18 above, p. 4.

²⁰ Amartya Sen, *Development as Freedom* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. xi.

²¹ *Ibid.*, xii and 10 [emphasis added].

*political freedoms, economic facilities, social opportunities, transparency guarantees, and protective security.*²²

As is now widely recognised, Sen's theory of development, together with other contributions such as that of Mahbub al Haq, has become a major foundation of contemporary discourse on poverty eradication, including the newly developing norm of human security. This is clear, among other things, from the testimonial of two leading authorities on the link between development and human rights, namely Philip Alston and Mary Robison, who agree that following the "powerfully persuasive work" of Sen, the link between development and human rights has "become something of a policy and philosophical commonplace."²³ Sen's development as freedom resonates with the two major components of human security, namely "freedom from want," and "freedom from fear"—which are all aimed at promoting "the vital core of all human lives."²⁴

Historically traced to the 1941 "Four Freedoms Speech" of Franklin Roosevelt, "freedom from want" and "freedom from fear" have become the hallmark of human security, which in turn has become a growing international norm emphasising on the security of the individual person as opposed to traditional conceptions of security which focus on the security of the state. The "freedom from want" component of human security emphasises on the need to ensure the freedom of the individual person from severe economic deprivation such as poverty and other threats of socioeconomic inequality and lack of social justice. The second component of human security, "freedom from fear," which is also a reinforcement of "development as freedom," emphasises on the need to protect the individual person from physical security threats such as war and domestic threats of brutalization or repression.²⁵ These concepts have now received global recognition by a number of international reports such as the annual UNDP *Human Development Report* (1994), the *Report of the International Commission on Human Security* (2003), and the Report of the UN Secretary General, *In*

²² Ibid, 10 [emphasis added].

²³ Philip Alston and Mary Robison, "The Challenges of Ensuring the Mutuality of Human Rights and Development Endeavours," in *Human Rights and Development*, ed. Philip Alston and Mary Robison (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 14.

²⁴ *Human Security Now*, note 18 above, p. 4.

²⁵ Fen O. Hampson and Christopher K. Penny, "Human Security," in *The Oxford Handbook on the United Nations*, ed. Thomas G. Weiss and Sam Daws (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 538–539.

Larger Freedom: Towards Development, Security and Human Rights for All (2005). The overall impact is that the link between human rights, human security and human development is increasingly becoming a universally accepted international norm. With varying degrees of relevance, this serves as the overarching theoretical framework for the lines of arguments discussed in different parts of this volume.

As noted before, the Horn of Africa has been bedevilled by perilous cycles of conflict for several decades. As a long-time observer, Plaut, for example, describes this region as “a region in which governments routinely plot against each other, cultivating opposition movements to undermine neighbouring regimes.”²⁶ According to him, this region has “a long tradition of infiltrating rebels across borders, of shipping arms and ammunition to foster rebellion.” Characteristically, the countries in the Horn of Africa suffer from a deep mistrust which makes it easier for them “to plot and scheme than plan for peace,” as they are sure that the other counterpart would also be doing much the same. In a region where “open discussion and public debate is firmly suppressed,” there is no room for democratic dialogue, which is a very essential precondition for peace and security.²⁷ Borrowing the statement of one of the architects of “African Renaissance,” this part of Africa is a place where “guns have usurped the place of reason” routinely, and “opposing ramparts [speak] to one another in the deadly language of bazooka and mortar shells and the fearsome rhythm of the beat of machine-gun fire.”²⁸ Understandably, the prevailing political situation in the Horn of Africa is anti-thesis to the objectives that have to be achieved using the theoretical framework of human security, human development and human rights.

Taking the above observation as a major assumption, the contributions in this volume try to address some of the underlying causes of human suffering in the Horn of Africa with a view to exploring sustainable solutions to the malaises of the region. Some of the questions, the editors and the authors tried to address include: What kind of analytical tools and techniques

²⁶ Martin Plaut, “Report of the 2010 Atlanta Peace Conference on the Horn of Africa,” Broadcast of BBC’s *From Our Own Correspondent*, available at http://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/p00cjwppw/From_Our_Own_Correspondent_25_12_2010/ (accessed on 25 December 2010).

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Thabo Mbeki, “The African Renaissance Statement,” 13 August 1998, available at <http://www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/history/mbeki/1998/tm0813.htm>.

of engagement are required to resolve the perennial conflicts and disproportionate human suffering in the region, including the underlying root causes of such conflicts? What kind of strategies and innovative approaches can help in resolving the growing tendency of “compassion fatigue” regional and international actors have demonstrated as a result of the intricate and protracted conflicts in the region?

1.4. Some methodological issues

Like in many other edited volumes, this volume has some limitations that should be made clear to the reader at the outset. First and most, the writers of the different chapters come from a diverse of academic disciplines, with a varying degree of differentiation in their theoretical frameworks. While this chapter has tried to clarify the underlying theoretical framework of the volume, due to variations on academic backgrounds, varied styles of argumentation and analysis are expected throughout the chapters. Without departing further from the main theoretical framework, authors have taken the liberty of using different research methodologies, which include standard techniques of social science research (such as field notes and interviews) as well as a literature review of secondary sources by international publicists as appearing in textbooks, academic journals, newspapers, internet sources and others. In trying to address the research questions asked above, the chapters depart from the need to understand the continued cycle of conflicts and man-made calamities in the Horn of Africa, which, as noted before, is anti-thesis to human security, human rights and human development.

It is common knowledge that many edited volumes do suffer from lack of coherency and disjointedness. To the extent possible, the editors have tried to minimise this problem through the construction of a unifying intellectual purpose discussed in the preceding paragraphs of this chapter. However, the editors also acknowledge that each contributor may not have covered the core theme of this volume in the same level of rigour. Readers may also observe that greater coverage is given in this volume to Eritrea than other countries of the region. This is explained by the following factor. While the government of each country of the region is to take its own blame in making the Horn of Africa one of the most inhospitable places for

human beings, in recent years the Eritrean government seems to be taking the blame disproportionately. In the last ten to fifteen years, the government in Eritrea has become not only increasingly totalitarian (internally) but also a major regional spoiler in the entire Horn of Africa (externally). Based on well-documented observations of UN expert groups and other sources of information, Plaut rightly notes that: “It is not difficult to construct a narrative that suggests that Eritrea is the major source of instability of the Horn.”²⁹ That is why greater coverage is given to Eritrea in this volume, mainly focusing on the alarming issue of mass exodus of the Eritrean population, that being one of the primary indicators of the sad state of affairs in human security, human development and human rights in the region.

1.5. Sequence of chapters

The chapters in this volume are structured as follows. The current chapter provides general introductory remarks. In Chapter Two, Hartmut Quehl compares the political, economic, social and military reconfigurations of the Horn of Africa with two other regions of the world, namely, the Western Asia and the Central America regions. Quehl argues that although located on different continents and represent different cultures, the three regions share a long history of continued armed conflict. As a result, they all experienced a prolonged and difficult transformation from war to post-war societies. They all had to cope with political and economic transformation processes, and they all faced the challenge of permanent threat to state authority and even state integrity ever since globalisation processes started to determine the world order after the decay of the Eastern bloc.

Quehl uses in particular three country case studies to explore these regional processes of reconfiguration: Eritrea, Kurdistan-Iraq, and Nicaragua. All of these countries are ruled by ex-liberation fronts, which gained power after prolonged liberation wars. All three of them had to re-shape their ancient revolutionary heritages due to a permanent changing global economic environment, and all of them are extremely embedded into fragile regional settings which determine their permanent balancing within the triangle of (voluntary or forced) isolation, efforts of joining and participating in global economies, and permanent struggle to avoid a

²⁹ Plaut, note 7 above, p. 325.

collapse of the economic and political systems as well as a dissolution of the respective social and societal make-up. The chapter by Quehl aims at opening a new perspective on the developments in the Horn of Africa by analysing its socio-political, economic and military developments through comparison with other parts of the world, thus trying to explore to what extent the situation in this particular region is unique, and to what extent it reflects global changes. Quehl's chapter clearly establishes the required link between the major theoretical framework of this volume—the link between human security, human development and human rights, as envisaged in terms of the dangers fragile states face.

In Chapter Three, Jan Záhorský discusses the likelihood of Oromia becoming an independent state in the Horn of Africa, following the footsteps of Eritrea and the Republic of South Sudan. Záhorský notes that the Oromo people are the most numerous in the Horn of Africa and the Oromo nationalism is one of the most sensitive issues of contemporary socio-political development in Ethiopia. As a matter of principle and right, the Oromo people, like any other people, are entitled to claim and exercise their right to self-determination, but given the political realities of Ethiopia and the region at large, Záhorský argues that the likelihood of such a political project becoming a reality is less probable.

Furthermore, Záhorský notes that while in the case of Eritrea and South Sudan, there were sufficient historical antecedents that favoured the ultimate independence of the two states, the case of Oromia seems to be lacking in this regard. Some of the most important reasons discussed by Záhorský include lack of coherence in the Oromo nationalist movement, including lack of international support for any separatist movement, particularly in Ethiopia, which is traditionally regarded as a stable country with relatively minimal tensions and internal conflicts. As such, any high-level conflict led by a desire to proclaim an independent territory within contemporary Ethiopia's borders would be hardly welcome by the international community. Compared to similar regional experiences, the Oromo nationalist movement also seems to be lacking a requisite historical legitimacy in terms of clearly defined territorial entity. In this regard, Záhorský asks that in case a new state called Oromia would be established in the future, which borders will be taken as official? The validity of the question is very clear from another observation Záhorský makes, which says that there had never been

any entity called Oromia with clearly defined, internationally recognized, undisputable borders (like in the case of Eritrea, for example).

The fourth chapter in this volume, authored by Mussie Tesfagiorgis, is titled “The Odyssey of African Refugees From Troubled Homes to Human Organ Harvesters: The Case of Horn of African Refugees in Sudan, Libya and Egypt’s Sinai.” As is clear from the title, Tesfagiorgis addresses contemporary circumstances and human rights concerns of refugee communities in some host countries within and beyond the African continent. Building on reports and studies presented by international human rights organizations and the UN refugee agency, Tesfagiorgis notes that the Horn of Africa has become one of the most refugee-producing territories in the world. Based on this observation, he examines some of the main factors behind the refugee crisis in the Horn. Substantiating his analysis by first-hand information obtained from refugees and victims, Tesfagiorgis explores factors that are leading to critical conditions of refugees, who flee their countries of origin and attempt to flee through Libya and Egypt. By focusing mainly on Eritrean victims, he shows the extent to which Eritrea has also become one of the leading refugee producing countries in the world, a trait which points to the dire state of human suffering in the country.

In Chapter Five, titled “Self-Determination and Interdependence in Sudan and the Horn of Africa,” Giorgio Musso observes that the Horn of Africa has suffered for quite a long time from what seems to be an endless cycle of fragmentation. He then argues that the political instability in the Horn of Africa region is often attributed to self-determination struggles threatening to alter the established post-colonial boundaries. Musso is of the view that self-determination should be seen as more than simply a synonym of secession, and that territorial separation may be unavoidable when conflicts reach a point of no return. Musso considers separation as a step towards the fulfilment of popular aspirations for good governance and development, not an end in itself. Taking Sudan as a case study, he shows how secession is more about managing interdependencies than achieving mutual isolation. Extending the outlook to the regional level, Musso contends that the management of interdependence is the key to defuse the current tension between fragmentation and unity in the Horn of Africa. For Musso, interdependencies can cause conflicts at the local and national level when they produce highly asymmetric power relations and when they are managed outside a regulated

framework. Conversely, if entrusted to proper institutional mechanisms, he argues, interdependencies can help to overcome the centre-periphery imbalances that have characterized state-formation in the Horn of Africa and foster regional integration.

The next two chapters in the volume, Chapter Six and Chapter Seven, return the focus once more into Eritrea, a country whose government is increasingly recognised as the major spoiler of regional peace and security in the Horn of Africa. Using the theoretical framework of forced migration (as also related to human security and human development), these chapters further explore the alarming level of mass exodus in Eritrea, which was also discussed in the chapter by Tesfagiorgis. In Chapter Six, Magnus Treiber traces how each year, since the end of the Ethio-Eritrean border war, tens of thousands of Eritrean citizens have been fleeing their country in unprecedented numbers. Most of them are young people deserting the coercive National Service Programme in Eritrea or secondary school students avoiding forthcoming forced conscription. However, Treiber notes that to leave Eritrea's dictatorial regime, its despotic rule and the country's ongoing crisis and to cross the border alive is just a first step in a journey fraught with uncertainty. Treiber shows this by tracing the geographical and biographical trajectories of conscripts of the National Service Programme in Eritrea, as interviewed in Eritrea and in other places. Treiber's analysis sheds some light on existential questions, knowledge transformation, and learning processes in the migration processes of a new generation of Eritrean refugees. He does so by referring to typical places, biographical episodes, and shared experiences.

Taking the issue of forced migration further, in Chapter Seven, Daniel Mekonnen concurs with Tesfagiorgis (Chapter Four) and Treiber (Chapter Six) in describing Eritrea as one of the leading refugee-producing countries in the world. In so doing, Mekonnen notes that forced migration is one of the major indicators of human insecurity, thereby creating a solid link with the overarching theoretical framework of this volume—as already discussed in the current chapter (Chapter One). Mekonnen also notes that throughout its history, Eritrea has seen a recurring cycle of mass political violence and contagious regional armed conflicts. After independence in 1991, Eritrea experienced a major decline in the mass exodus of its population. The trend has completely changed in the aftermath of the 1998–2000 Eritrea-Ethiopia border conflict, and particularly after 2001 when Eritrea became one of the most

repressive regimes in the world. By emphasising the link between forced migration and human insecurity, Mekonnen examines pre- and post-migration patterns of victimisation among Eritrean refugees in the Netherlands. He also analyses the challenge both from a victimological and human security perspective. His study is based on narratives of victimisation told by Eritrean refugees in the Netherlands, who arrived in the country in recent years, thus making the new generation of Eritrean immigrants.

The last two chapters in this volume are by Bethlehem Daniel and Mussie Tesfagiorgis, which are Chapter Eight and Chapter Nine, respectively. In Chapter Eight, Bethlehem Daniel offers general background information on the Horn of Africa countries with a view to enlightening the uniformed reader. In Chapter Nine, Mussie Tesfagiorgis concludes the volume by recapturing the major arguments and discussions throughout the chapters. At the end of the book, we have an annexure in the form of a timeline of key events in the Horn of Africa, compiled by Mussie Tesfagiorgis.

CHAPTER TWO

SHAPING THE WORLD – REGIONAL RECONFIGURATIONS BETWEEN GLOBALIZATION PROCESSES AND AUTO DYNAMICS: A COMPARISON BETWEEN THE HORN OF AFRICA, WEST ASIA AND CENTRAL AMERICA

Hartmut Quehl

Abstract

The paper intends to compare the political, economic, social and military reconfigurations in three different parts of the world that are located on different continents and represent different cultures. Nevertheless, they all share a long history of continued armed conflict, they all experienced a prolonged and difficult transformation from war to post-war societies, they all had to cope with political and economic transformation processes, and they all faced the challenge of permanent threat to state authority and even state integrity ever since globalisation processes started to determine the world order after the decay of the Eastern bloc.

The paper uses three country case studies to explore these regional reconfiguration processes: Eritrea, Kurdistan-Iraq, and Nicaragua. All three of them are ruled by ex-liberation fronts which gained power after prolonged liberation wars, all three of them had to re-shape their ancient revolutionary heritages due to a permanent changing global economic environment, and all of them are extremely embedded into fragile regional settings which determine their permanent balancing within the triangle of (voluntary or forced) isolation, efforts of joining and participating in global economies, and permanent struggle to avoid a collapse of the economic and political systems as well as a dissolution of the respective social and societal make-up.

This contribution aims at opening a new perspective on the developments in the Horn by analysing its socio-political, economic and military developments through comparison with other parts of the world, thus trying to explore to what extent the situation in East Africa is unique, and to what extent it reflects global changes.

Key terms: *ex-liberation fronts, globalisation, Horn of Africa, Western Asia, Central America*

2.1. Introduction

During one of my stays in Iraqi Kurdistan in 2007 I came across an oversized mural in the military headquarters of the Kurdish army in Duhok which showed a map of a reconfigured Middle East. After further investigation, I discovered that this map had been published in a Kurdish magazine, but was obviously not of Kurdish origin. I was not able to trace the source.³⁰ It is clearly a political statement that this map, which shows a unified Kurdistan, incorporating geographical parts of all currently existing countries with a Kurdish population, is publicly exposed in a military building.



³⁰ Source unknown. Text above map reads: “The current map of the Middle East. The name of the Kurds and the State of Kurdistan do not appear.” Text below map reads: “The future map of the Middle East. The name of the Kurds and Great Kurdistan can be seen.”

This political statement is not, however, one that is publicly announced by political representatives of the Kurdish Regional Government in Northern Iraq. Further to this, this map shows important changes in other geographical contexts: the Arabian Peninsula, the neighbouring Levante, as well as the broader region of Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan have all been fundamentally restructured. It is obvious that this restructuring – if ever realized - would not only bear geographical and territorial consequences, but also cause serious changes in political, economic and social structures.

The greater area of the Horn of Africa does appear in this map, but only partially, on the lower edge. Here, Eritrea is already marked as an independent state which means, that this map was definitely designed after 1993. If we try to extend these visions of a reconfigured Middle East to the Horn of Africa, we can see that corresponding changes in the territorial settings have already been enacted more than two decades ago. Here, the collapse of the blocs resulted in fundamental change of the geographical, political, economic and social structures which have not been concluded to date.

In the case of the Horn of Africa, these changes were related to the course of various liberation and independence wars and their outcomes. Eritrea and Somaliland are primarily the result of the anti-system wars of liberation fronts, and the same is true for the most recent example of South Sudan. The latent danger of fragmentation, which permanently threatened Ethiopia after 1991, and which tore Somalia apart, was primarily the consequence of a shift in the global balance of power, which not only amended the then existing bipolar international system, but also put regional subsystems in question. We can see that in the Horn of Africa, the interrelationship of global, regional and local factors determined when such territorial reconfigurations were successful or not– i.e. in which moment the change of structure and order within a changing system would succeed.

The same is true for Iraqi Kurdistan: on the one hand, it is the result of a successful anti-system war of liberation fronts. On the other hand, it was the result of changing global constellations, and in this case in particular, a result of the American military intervention in

1991. These same US military troops had, however, also intervened in Somalia under similar circumstances in 1991, with a completely different result.

Obviously, these kinds of reconfigurations occur differently in different regions and are independent of whether global conditions were identical or not. So, what influence do global processes and local auto dynamics have on regional reconfigurations? And how can such regional reconfigurations in different parts of the world be seen in relationship with each other?

This paper aims to elaborate regional differences and congruencies of country case studies through transcultural comparison. It also aims to approach the question of which consequences have resulted from the correlation of local and global factors in different parts of the world, and to detect relationships between them. The victorious liberation fronts in Eritrea, Iraqi Kurdistan and Nicaragua will serve as examples. In this way, the historical developments in the Horn of Africa – with special regard to Eritrea – may be classified in the context of world history.

The term reconfiguration was initially used to describe changes that occurred within military complexes during demobilization processes after the dissolution of the blocs (of the end of the Cold War) from around 1991 onwards. The decade of the 1990s, when a number of armed conflicts came to an end, especially in Africa, produced the notion, that the transition from war to peace had to be accompanied by large scale demobilization, supported by the international donor community. But in reality, these demobilization measures emerged as instruments of the respective power holders to reconfigure the military complex by exchanging the military personnel, modernizing its weapon systems, and transforming former irregular structures into a conventional military apparatus, thus strengthening and expanding the military sector instead of downsizing it.³¹

³¹ Francesco Zappatelli und Richard M. Trivelli, “Die schwachen Starken - Vergebliche Deeskalationsstrategien im Kontext des Eritrea-Äthiopien-Konflikts 1941-2004” in *Deeskalation von Gewaltkonflikten seit 1945*, ed. Corinna Hauswedell. Series: *Frieden und Krieg, Beiträge zur Historischen Friedensforschung*, Volume 7 (Essen, 2006); Francesco Zappatelli and Richard M. Trivelli, “Demobilisierung ohne Nachhaltigkeit. Die Fallbeispiele Äthiopien und Eritrea,” *Wissenschaft & Frieden*, November 2005; Hartmut Quehl, “Globalisierung, Krieg und Gewalt in Eritrea” in *Kulturen und Konflikte im Vergleich – Comparing Cultures and Conflicts*, ed. Peter Molt und Helga Dickow (Festschrift for Theodor Hanf: Baden-Baden 2007).

Simultaneously, it could be observed that former liberation fronts worked strategically on a reconfiguration of the existing economic system after their transformation into a government. In the case of the former war enemies, Ethiopia and Eritrea, it is well documented how the ex-liberation fronts constructed their own economic empires and how they managed to secure their monopoly within the national economy.³²

In this sense, reconfiguration should be understood as a process of reorganizing existing structures with the objective of optimizing the initiating actor's position of power, or that of the actively participating parties. Regional reconfigurations arise in the tension between global interdependencies and local auto dynamics. An investigation of regional reconfigurations must therefore be based upon an analysis of local and regional developments within a global context. A transcultural comparison explores the question, whether there are comparable local constellations which lead to similar regional reconfigurations, or rather, under which circumstances they may do so and furthermore whether different regional reconfigurations may be somehow connected to one another.

In the following, I will attempt to use a cross-cultural comparison to investigate the three country case studies of Iraqi Kurdistan, Eritrea and Nicaragua. I will cover three different levels:

- a) The micro level – the comparison of fighters' life experiences in wartimes
- b) The meso level – the comparison of the country case studies with a focus on the liberation fronts
- c) The macro level – exploring correlations of events which enable us to analyse regional developments within a global framework.

³² Howard Hughes, "Eine Volksarmee besonderer Art – der eritreische Militärkomplex, 2005, available at http://www.connection-eV.de/Afrika/eri_militaer.pdf; ders; The role of the Front and the State in the Economy, unpublished script, o.O., 2004; Coll.: HQ.

2.2. Determinants and limits of comparison of the three regions with regard to world history and cultural studies on the micro, meso and macro levels

A first look into the structural components of the wars which raged in the three countries of Eritrea, Iraqi Kurdistan and Nicaragua reveals a couple of similarities: all three wars took place during the same period of 1961 to 1991. All wars show a similar development from an initial phase in the 1960s, followed by a phase of ideological orientation and restructuring in the 1970s, then a phase of intensification of the fighting during the 1980s while the respective fronts simultaneously managed to consolidate their positions, and finally the end of hostilities around 1991. All the cases were characterized by a fragmentation and reorganization of the liberation fronts, and all fronts tried to set up proto-statal or quasi-statal structures in their liberated territories. In all cases, rival factions fought against each other, and all three ex-liberation fronts were engaged in a new war with the former enemy during postwar times. Even external exposure of the wars shows similarities as illustrated by the following photographs:



The first picture was taken in Eritrea; the second was taken in the Anfal Center in the Kurdish city of Duhok. The third picture, on the bottom left, shows war remnants in Adi Shurum/ Eritrea, while the photograph on the bottom right was taken in Iraqi Kurdistan close to the Syrian border.³³

³³ Photo top left: Helga Tewes; photo top right and bottom row: Hartmut Quehl.



We can thus discover chronological parallels and to a certain extent, the images of the war are interchangeable. A comparison of individual war experiences underlines this notion, as the following excerpts document.

2.3. The micro level – the comparison of fighters’ life experiences in wartimes

The first quote originates from a book on Nicaragua by the American journalist Stephen Kinzer. It describes an event of the years 1980-1981 in a small village called Cuapa, where a simple farmer experienced the appearance of the Virgin Mary several times:

At first, Bernardo Martínez was afraid of the virgin, and told no one about his encounters with her. But again and again, during his daily walks to and from the farm in late 1980 and early 1981, she appeared in his path, always bathed in radiant light. Finally he confided in the priest who visited Cuapa on Sundays. ... Soon news of the apparition leaked out. Villagers erected a rustic shrine on a hillside ... soon Nicaraguans by the hundreds began making pilgrimage to Cuapa ...³⁴

The next quote stems from an interview with a Kurdish fighter from the year 2007:

It was the mountains that rescued us, the mountains and the caves, otherwise Saddam would have killed us all. You know there are magic caves out there, sometimes you find caves with water: cold as ice in summer, and a hot spring in winter. Wallahi, this was

³⁴ Stephen Kinzer, *Blood of Brothers: Life and War in Nicaragua* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 2007), p. 190ff.

given by God. How can the same spring be cold as ice in summer and boiling hot in winter? This is a miracle; it's a holy place...³⁵

The third quote comes from Eritrea. Here, Dngus Aray Naf'e, one of the veterans of the Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF) during the initial period, describes a confrontation with Adem Saleh in the early 1970s, when it came to a split among the ranks of the ELF:

... Adem Saleh came to me and said that they'd split He asked me to join them saying ... they had 50 SIMANOV guns. ... I said you from Beni Amr have different politics; I know only politics of our country; let's divide the 50 SIMANOVs and die together. I said if we don't distribute the guns ... I kill half of you and when the army comes we would annihilate you all. He says that I have ERUG (a medicine thought to make me immune from death). I said this way or that I will take half of it.³⁶

All three quotes expose one core element of the wars which developed from 1961 onwards in Eritrea, Nicaragua and Kurdistan alike: these wars were initiated in predominantly rural societies, and these societies were characterized by a deep-seated religiousness which embraced both mysticism and popular belief.

Another interesting similarity is exposed in the following quotes, where ex-fighters describe their retrospective assessment of the wartimes. The following statement of a *tagadalit*³⁷ of the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) applies to all three cases: "In the struggle, there is nothing good. There was one good thing: 'living together.'"³⁸

These two sentences express a paradox which is characteristic of all three ex-freedom fighters' societies: there was nothing good in wartimes, but the everyday life experiences of the combatants provide a cause for nostalgic transfiguration of the past, as the following excerpts document.

Firstly, an Eritrean veteran fighter who joined the EPLF with Sagem says:

³⁵ Interview with Hacı, February 2007, Coll.: HQ.

³⁶ Interview with Dngus Arey Naf'e, 16.5.1999, Coll.: HQ

³⁷ *Tagadelti* (Plural of *Tagadalay* (m), and *Tagadalit* (f)) is the name used for the Eritrean combatants of the liberation fronts.

³⁸ Interview with L.H.K. (m), May/June 1998, Coll.: HQ.

That life (in wartimes) now I long it. When you compare it with the life that we are experiencing today it is very different. Though there were hardships; injury; death at that time, I was happier. But the bond that we created then never came back today.³⁹

The next quote comes from a Kurdish Peshmerga veteran fighter of the Golan generation:⁴⁰

The gun in his hand, that that was everything. I feel a longing. Especially when I think back to the old guerrilla days. When we got five Dinars in those days, we knew that those five dinars would be shared among 20 Peshmerga. You knew you'd be buying socks or shoes or cigarettes. What a world that was.

The last quote describes the feelings of an ex-contra combatant in Nicaragua:

Look at me, how I am living today! I have been shot 5 times, I cannot walk, I can hardly work. Life in wartimes was better.”⁴¹

In all three cases, we can detect a certain similar ex-freedom fighters' nostalgia for the “old times,” although all three wars proceeded totally differently in terms of intensity and implementation.

Nevertheless, we come across certain points in the encounters where clear differences become obvious. The question, to what extent are these differences, within the framework of intercultural congruencies described above, rooted in specific cultural influences, remains unanswered. This may be true for the extent of individual violence which had been perpetrated, the existence or non-existence of psychological barriers due to societal socialization, the attitude towards child or teenage soldiers and so forth.

Differences in the extent of the perpetration of violence can also be found on the next level of analysis: for instance, why was poison gas used as a genocidal tool in Iraqi Kurdistan, where an estimated number of 145 000 victims died?⁴² And why in 1988? For what reason is there only one documented and proven case of the use of poison gas in Eritrea, with only one

³⁹ Interview with T.H. (m), 22.2.1998, Coll.: HQ.

⁴⁰ *Peshmerga* is the name of the Kurdish combatants of the liberation fronts.

⁴¹ Interview with A. (m), Interview notes taken from memory, November 2010.

⁴² Human Rights Watch, *Genocide in Iraq: The Anfal Campaign against the Kurds* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 1993).

casualty?⁴³ Why in 1982, and why did the EPLF fear until the end of the war, that a poison gas attack could be repeated? Why did poison gas never play a role in the Nicaraguan conflict?

2.4. The meso level – a comparison of the country case studies with a focus on the liberation fronts

Comparing at the meso level is far more difficult than a comparison at grassroots level. As we have noticed in the excerpts of the interviews, all three wars took place in predominantly rural societies which were deeply rooted in tradition and popular belief. If we look at the formation of an elite class in all three societies, it can be seen that a socialist urban elite took over in a specific historical situation, imposed itself upon the society and sought to find a symbiosis with societal traditions. But even here we can detect remarkable differences.

In Eritrea, we find a reallocation of particular components of traditional everyday life as a leitmotif of the fronts' politics, especially of the EPLF. In Nicaragua, we find an absorption of traditional religious components through the inclusion of Christianity as a component of the revolution. In Kurdistan, by contrast, it can be said that a so-called "urban elite" does not really exist in its pure sense, but rather an "urbanized thinking elite" which formed an integral part of the traditional ashira hierarchies, and which survived the whole course of the armed struggle.

So, when we compare these wars we can detect a whole range of structural congruencies which at the same time might fundamentally differ if we take a closer look into the respective country case studies.⁴⁴

⁴³ Ten years overall development of the EPLF. EPLF, Field, o.J. (1985) (KUQ2T), Coll.: Research and Documentation Centre Asmara (RDC), Signature: EPLF / His / Mil / 1 / 03101; S.U. Types of Agent, N.A., N.P., N.D.; Best.: RDC, Sign.: EPLF/His/Mil/3/03177.

⁴⁴ The entirety of the Eritrean war of independence has been extensively researched. See, for example, Hartmut Quehl, *Kämpferinnen und Kämpfer nach einem langen Krieg – Faktoren der Diversivität und der Kohärenz*, 2 Volumes, Felsberg: FIBW 2005. Comparably comprehensive studies on Nicaragua and Kurdistan are yet to be done.

I would like to document this fact by listing some core elements. In all three country case studies, the following statements are true:

1. The end of the first war does not signify the end of the basic conflict constellation but rather leads to a progression from war to interim-wartime to new war;
2. No demobilization but military reconfiguration;
3. Transformation of victorious liberation fronts into authoritarian regimes;
4. Social transformation of combatants: dissocialization – new socialization – dissolution
5. Post-wartime division between “lost generation” (of ex-rank-and-file combatants) and “ruling body”;
6. Instrumentalization of geopolitical environment causes the conflict to become auto dynamic and provokes local centrism.

Below this general level of structural congruency we can list particular determinants that allow us to detect and measure differences.

| Congruence | Difference |
|---|---|
| Progress from war to interim-wartime to new war | Shape of second war Intensity of conflict Degree of instability of new regime |
| Transformation of a liberation front into government | Degree of authoritarian structures |
| Political concepts of revolution and/or national self-determination | Combination with authentic traditional patterns |
| Periodisation of the course of the war | Length and intensity of the war |
| Mechanisms of combatant socialisation | Degree of combatant dis-socialisation |
| Experience of violence | Extent and perpetration of violence |
| Wartime elite building as a result of internal generation dispute | Degree of post-war ruling elite’s stability |
| Role of conflict in geostrategic and global political frame | US-Involvement |

I would like to illustrate this by means of the following selected examples:

a) *The relations between the military and political sectors*

In Kurdistan, parallel leadership had already existed since 1946: the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) party led politically alongside military leadership under the Peshmerga. In Eritrea on the other hand, there was no party in the initial stage of the struggle, but rather a political and a military leadership structure which was dissolved in the late 1960s in favour of a pure military orientation, while the political structures were reorganized in secret cadre parties which were only revealed to the public after 1991. By contrast, in Nicaragua, the Sandinista National Liberation Front (in Spanish, Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional or FSLN) was founded like a military organization which evolved out of the students' movement. The FSLN could perhaps be best characterized as a predominantly military-oriented liberation front based on political foundations.

Furthermore we have to take into consideration that the Peshmerga did not purely progress from guerrilla unit to front and thereafter into a regular army. This corresponds with the fact that on the political level there was no simple progression from a liberation front into a government. Periods of government authority (Mahabad, Statute of Autonomy) alternated with periods of guerrilla organization (liberated areas, government-in-waiting).

In contrast to that, we find a clear progression on the military as well as the political level in Eritrea. Militarily, the guerrilla units of ELF and then EPLF developed into a front and then into an army. Likewise, the conduct of war developed from the initial hit-and-run tactics through a combination of strategical offense and strategical retreat into positional warfare and thereafter into conventional warfare. On the political side, we can find a parallel progression where the front developed into a proto-state (state in waiting / on hold) and then into a government.

In Nicaragua, although we can recognize a certain military progression, it is within a much more limited and time-constrained frame and it appears to be far more arbitrary. The period

up to 1974 was more characterized by constant experimentation in search of an appropriate strategy than by progression. Surprisingly, the spectacular hostage-taking in the year 1974 marked a turning point which resulted in the fall of the regime within only 5 years. It was only the extensive fire of the second war which involved the entire country. It is especially at this point where the Nicaraguan example differs from other country case studies: the transition from wartime to post-war time, and the interim war period occurred much earlier than in Kurdistan and Eritrea.

b) Ideological references

With regard to international reference points, the Kurdish liberation struggle exposes a remarkable lack of ideology. Whereas other regions of the world were influenced by two great events either in the global or the regional context (the global movements in 1968, the events in Vietnam and in the regional context, the Structural Adjustment Programs and the Infitah processes of the 1980s), it seems that these events touched the Kurdish struggle only marginally. The ideological terminology of “decolonization” and “anti-zionism” are mostly absent. On the other hand, the take-over of power by the Peshmerga was marked as “thawra,” i.e. revolution.

This is quite different in the Eritrean case: from the very first day, the struggle was denominated as revolution, although its meaning was dependent on the respective political orientation of the fronts. Under the impression of the Vietnam War, it became clearly Marxist-Leninist as of 1967/68, and the Eritrean liberation struggle was defined as anti-imperialist and anti-zionist. Nevertheless, Eritrea never developed the idea of a defined “Third Way” to Socialism. Instead, the EPLF developed a pragmatic approach from 1982 onwards,⁴⁵ which verbally formulated the ideas of opening up to a democratic and mixed economy system, but de facto remained Maoist.

⁴⁵ EPLF – Department of Public Administration: Creating a Popular, Economic, Political and Military Base, Field 1982, Coll.: Günter Schröder.

Similarly, the liberation movement in Nicaragua also defined itself as revolution. The Chinese and Vietnamese experiences played a big role, and the FSLN oriented itself – like the Eritrean ELF – according to the Algerian example. But what was decisive for the Nicaraguan way was ultimately the regional context, i.e. the Cuban revolution. Fonseca and Borge’s decision to create a local ideological reference by using the historical figure of Sandino, indicated that the FSLN claimed a “Third Way” within the frame of Socialist reference, an adaptation of Marxist-Leninist principles to specific regional and local circumstances. In the end, this finally led towards an alliance of a Socialist liberation front with parts of the Christian movement and absorbed this as part of its ideology.⁴⁶

2.5. The macro level – exploring correlations of events which enable us to analyse local and regional developments within a global framework

On the macro level analysis, it is no longer comparison, but an exploration of the interdependency of events that is important.



⁴⁶ Hartmut Quehl, “Zum Umbau von Kriegsgesellschaften: Eritrea, Kurdistan und Nicaragua” in *Erbe des Kalten Krieges*, ed. Bernd Greiner et al. (Hamburg 2013).

The photograph above shows Ayatollah Khomeini entering the Sanandaj mosque in the year 1979. The rifle barrel in the upper part of the picture belongs to a member of Khomeini's bodyguard which was at that time partly composed of Kurdish Peshmerga.⁴⁷ The second photograph below was probably taken in 1985 or 1986 in Nicaragua and shows a contra unit in their fight against the Sandinistas.



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The link between these two pictures is the so-called Irangate affair of the Reagan administration. I would like to use this historical incident to list some random connections between Nicaragua, Eritrea and Kurdistan.

For example, some batches of ELF Tagadelti received military training in Iraq in the 1960s, and during this same time a Ba'th faction evolved within the ELF which tried to influence internal ELF policies.⁴⁹ It was at this time as well when the Iraqi version of Ba'thism developed into the strongest enemy of the Kurdish liberation struggle which finally ended in the attempted genocidal attacks against the Kurds under Saddam Hussein in 1988.

⁴⁷ Photo taken from: Susan Meiselas, *Kurdistan: In the Shadow of History* (New York: Random House, 1997).

⁴⁸ Cover picture of Kinzer, *Blood of Brothers*.

⁴⁹ Shumet Shishagn, "Power Struggle in the Eritrean Secessionist Movement" (MA Thesis, Addis Ababa University, 1984), 139 ff; Günter Schröder, *Zur organisatorischen Entwicklung der Eritreischen Unabhängigkeitsbewegung. Korrigierte und auf neueste Entwicklung ergänzte Fassung der Antwort auf Frage 1 der Anfrage des VG Hamburg im Gutachten vom Januar 1990, Frankfurt, März 1991.*

Among other places, Eritrean Tagadelti were trained in Cuba, and Cuba at that time was an important retreat area for Nicaraguan combatants.⁵⁰ Fonseca spent many years in exile in Cuba, as did Ortega and other members of the FSLN elite. On the other hand, Cuba got directly involved in the Eritrean liberation struggle as one of the warring parties which sided with the Ethiopian government and remained as one of the last Mengistu strongholds in Ethiopia until 1989.

Kurdish Peshmerga actively supported the Iranian revolution of 1979; as already mentioned, Barzanis Peshmerga units formed part of Khomeini's bodyguards. Sudan was for the Eritrean Tagadelti what was Iran meant for the Kurdish Peshmerga: the primary retreat area where the combatants and their organizations could at times move around freely. At other times, however, they were subjected to harsh restrictions, depending on the overall political ambience. This same situation continued to exist in the Islamic Republic of Iran in the years 1985 and 1986, when the Reagan administration smuggled American weapons via Israel into Iran for a period of 14 months in order to finance the contra war against the Sandinistas in Nicaragua.⁵¹ Around the same time the United States had revived its diplomatic relations to Iraq, and delivered to Iraq identical weapon systems as they had to Iran in 1987. The 5 billion dollar credit program of the USA was partly used by Saddam to finance the poison gas attacks against the Kurds in Iraq in 1988, with significant support from German firms. This genocidal attack nearly annihilated the Kurdish Peshmerga.⁵²

These correlations cannot really be interpreted. This confusing list of examples can only document some components of bilateral and multilateral relations which are not necessarily interdependent.

⁵⁰ "Notes from Political Cadre School Course of ELF 9/79-2/80," unknown author (course participant), English translation with remarks, Coll.: Günter Schröder, records of interview Osman Saleh Sabbe, 4.4.1983, Coll.: Günter Schröder.

⁵¹ Ross Cheit, "Understanding the Iran-Contra Affair," 2010, available at http://www.brown.edu/Research/Understanding_the_Iran_Contra_Affair/.

⁵² Ronald Ofteringer, "Irakische Vernichtungswaffen und industriestaatliche Proliferation: Die UN-Kommission für Irak (UNSCOM) und die Bundesrepublik, o.O., o.D., available at http://www.miprox.de/Sonstiges/Das_Ausmass_westlicher_Unterstuetzung_fuer_das_irakische_Regime.html.

2.6. Regional reconfigurations: global correlations, local auto dynamics and regional impacts

The collapse of the East and the West blocs between 1989 and 1991 truly marks a turning point in world history; it defines first of all the end of the long period of the Cold War era. The collapse of the Soviet Union signified the provisional termination of the competition between two social and economic orders, as well as the bi-polar military and political system. It also meant the defeat of an ideological reference system, which constituted the ideological basis for the overwhelming majority of the liberation and independence movements in the global south. This is also true for the three countries considered here, Eritrea, Nicaragua and Iraqi Kurdistan.

Surprisingly, the final success of the liberation fronts occurred at the same time as the collapse of their ideological reference system. This apparent paradox disappears as soon as we become conscious of the fact that the end of the cold war and the fall of the blocs played a far less important role for the global south as it played for Europe and North America. They were important for the regional changes in West Asia, Central America and the Horn of Africa, but not so decisive. In Iraqi Kurdistan, Eritrea and Nicaragua a gradual restructuring of their post-war societies took place, subject to different timing historical trajectories and with roots reaching a long way back into the times of the cold war era. The former liberation fronts were already prepared for the collapse of the Soviet Union, and they managed to shape the rebuilding process so successfully that all three successor organizations of the former liberation fronts even today – more than two decades after the collapse – are determining the fate of their respective countries.

In order to follow up and to understand these processes, it is important to investigate the interdependence of events and to link these with the aspect of regional reconfiguration. If we want to understand the transformation periods in these three countries after 1991, we will have to look way back into history. And if we want to understand why the structures which emerged out of these transformation processes still exist to date, we will have to search for the starting points of reconfiguration prior to the fall of the blocs.

2.7. Correlation of events and regional reconfigurations during the Cold War: the caesuras of 1961 and 1975

Many questions arise when we try to consider the chronological progressions of the various development prongs of the above-mentioned the levels under the aspect of transcultural comparison synchronously. I will address two of them as examples in the following: Why was it just then, around 1961, when “the first spark” ignited⁵³ and all three, ultimately successful independence and liberation movements resorted to the armed struggle? The year 1961 was the peak of decolonization on the African continent. In this year alone, 18 new states gained their independence. In the Middle East, however, with the exception of Algeria, the decolonization processes had occurred in a totally different manner and already belonged to the past. In Western Asia, this was the time of the Free Officers and the military coup d'états which ran parallel to the rise of the Ba'athists in Syria and Iraq. In Central America there was no decolonization process at all, but the time around 1960 was dominated by the Cuban revolution and its concomitants.

It was around the same time when the Cold War blocs and the Iron Curtain were established. Was this in any way connected to the redirection of the political emancipation movements towards violent conflict? An investigation of the serious global crises in the period between 1950 and 1962 which strongly influenced the formation of the blocs, does not give any clarification.⁵⁴ The Berlin crises of 1950 and 1962, the Korean War from 1950 onwards, the upheavals in East Germany in 1953 and Hungary in 1956, the Suez crisis of 1956, the Cuba crisis of 1962, and the Congo crisis from 1960 to 1964 can hardly be related to the independence and liberation wars that were waged in Eritrea, Nicaragua and Kurdistan.

In retrospect, we understand that in 1961 the moment was ripe to enter into violent conflict resolution. A deeper look into the three country case studies makes clear that this “ripe moment” was not necessarily linked to the formation of the Cold War blocs and an ideological link to Socialism. It seems that the striving for political emancipation was the

⁵³ The original Arabic title of the handwritten records of Adem Gindifel: What I saw and witnessed, Handwritten Manuscript, Kassala 1988, Coll.: Günter Schröder.

⁵⁴ Bernd Greiner *et al*, ed, Krisen im Kalten Krieg: Studien zum Kalten Krieg, Vol. 2, Hamburg 2008.

result of an internal process which is yet to be investigated in all its in-depth consequences. What we can state is that these internal developments opened up at a certain point and were sooner or later connected to the Socialist reference system.

It is exactly at this point that we have to ask: how global developments had been communicated; which instruments for internationalization were at the disposal of the new movements? In the Eritrean case, it was obviously Osman Saleh Sabbe who became the driving force for the international opening of the emerging liberation front. It was Sabbe who had maintained relations with the North African Region; who brought experience from the Algerian war of independence into Eritrea; who networked for the ELF in the Arab context and who tried to create an international forum of supporters for the Eritrean war of independence. And finally, it was Osman Saleh Sabbe who organized the first weapon supply from the Peoples' Republic of China to Eritrea.⁵⁵

But Sabbe was no Socialist; he was at best a brilliant pragmatist. How then did Socialism gain momentum as an ideological reference system?

It was Mohammed Said Nawid, then member of the Sudanese communist party, who first introduced socialist ideological aspects into the Eritrean struggle from 1958 onwards, although at the end of the day he remained without influence since the time was not ripe.⁵⁶ During this phase, the Eritrean movement was mainly working on the heroization of Hamid Idris Awate, and thereby the historization of its cause, namely a national revolution. It was looking for historical references, not social revolutionary ideologies. This became the task of the forthcoming generations.

While comparing the three country case studies and tracing the interrelations of historization, socialist ideologization and generational change, we can detect certain parallels. The following chart – although very simplified – shows that the “igniting spark” was fed in all three cases by a variety of resources and was linked to the historization of the nationalist

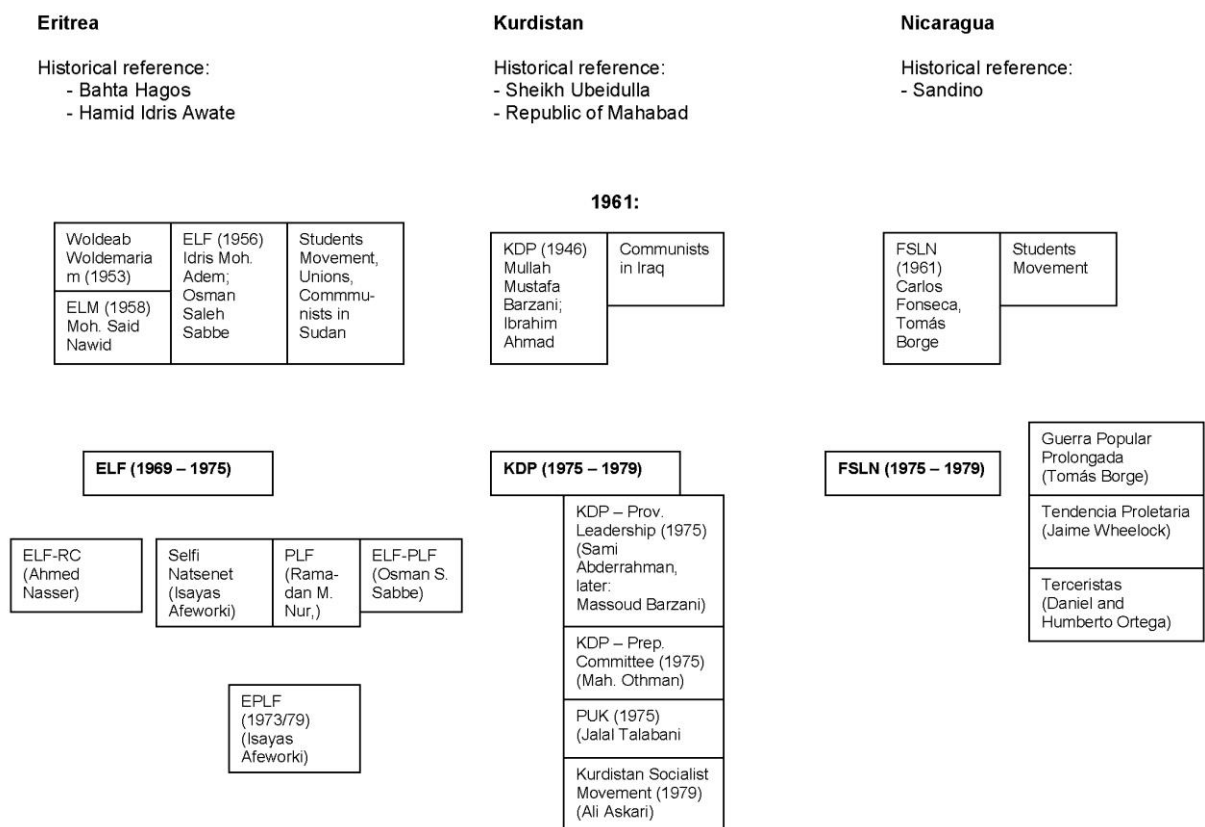
⁵⁵ Compiled Correspondence Letters of ELF with Foreign Governments & Institutions During the Early Years of the Armed Struggle, RDC, Asmara 1995; Coll.: RDC-Sign.: ELF Relation - ERI - A.S: Box No. 108.

⁵⁶ Nawid, Mohammed Said: Haraka Tahrir Iritriya. Al-haqiqa wa-l-tarikh (Arabic), Asmara 1993.

project. This socialist ideological formation period emerged only in the course of the 1960s and was concluded in all three cases around 1975. Again the conclusion of this process was linked in all three cases to the fragmentation of the organizational structures of the respective liberation fronts.

Once more, we have to ask the question why it was precisely the year 1975 which was so decisive. This question has to remain unanswered for the time being. But what becomes obvious, is the surprising parallels between the respective fronts as they began to identify with their socialist reference system and the internal fragmentations linked to this process. Differences can, however, be detected in the process of historization.

The following simplified chart demonstrates these lines of development.⁵⁷



⁵⁷ This graph is greatly simplified and does not encompass all demonstrable tendencies and connections.

The two examples of 1961 and 1975 indicate the existence of caesuras at which we can recognize parallel developments within a global context and assume interconnections.

2.8. Regional reconfigurations in the light of global, regional and local correlations: The example of 1977-1980

I would like to demonstrate by means of the following example that such constellations of event correlations do have consequences on the global, the regional and the local level. During the phase 1977–1980, the way was paved toward sustainable changes in all three regions.

The period under consideration fell in the term of office of the American Jimmy Carter and Soviet Russian Leonid Brezhnev, and was defined by, among other things, the Ogaden war from 1977 to 1978, the take-over in Afghanistan and the succeeding invasion of the Soviet Army in 1979, the success of the Islamic Revolution in Iran and the Sandinista revolution in Nicaragua, both in 1979. The Camp David treaty, the Trojillo-Carter treaty regarding the return of the Panama Canal, and the SALT 2 treaty which was negotiated between the super powers, also all fell in this period.

We know today, that the decisions which were taken then led the war between the Derg regime and the Eritrean liberation fronts into a war of attrition whose first victim at the end of the day was the ELF. We know further, that these events of global importance fuelled the civil war in El Salvador, which was among the most atrocious and most costly wars in terms of numbers of victims in the whole of Latin America.⁵⁸ We know today, that these events actually laid the grounds for the Western supporters' alliance of the Saddam regime, whose cruellest action was the poison gas attacks and the attempted genocide of the Kurdish population in 1988. And even now we are confronted daily with the consequences of the decisions taken then, on the fate of Afghanistan.

⁵⁸ With a special focus on Nicaragua, see Fabián Escalante, *Operación Calipso. La Guerra Sucia de los Estados Unidos contra Nicaragua 1979-1983*, Mexico 2008.

Given the changed state of knowledge of the relevant sources after the opening of the Eastern archives, there seems to be consensus in academic research that the pre-1991 perception of a fundamental conflict between a weak, de-escalation oriented Carter administration and an aggressive-offensive Soviet policy under Breshnev, Kossigyn and Gromyko was nothing but a fundamental misinterpretation.⁵⁹

Rather, many facts indicate that the Soviet policy of this period had a more defensive character with the primary objective to secure the existing status quo and not to expand. The Soviet side seems to have been perfectly aware of the fact that the Afghanistan invasion would create a problem with an unpredictable outcome. In 1978 and 1979, Afghanistan shared a common border with the Soviet Union, so the intervention was initiated based on the conviction that its own territory had to be protected.

There are also indications that parts of the Soviet leadership at this point already started to suspect the fundamental economic difficulties of the empire. In this respect, the Soviet strategy of streamlining and concentrating the worldwide Socialist potential became increasingly logical. It seems at first glance a paradox that this evaluation resulted in an initial increase in expenditure on weapons.

We can moreover observe that worldwide conflict escalation was only partially due to the initiative of the super powers. It is another paradox of the Cold War era that decisions of the “weak satellites” could force the super powers to act or react and thus set in motion developments which neither the USA nor the USSR had intended.⁶⁰

This is true for the Islamic revolution in Iran as well as for the communist takeover in Afghanistan and the Sandinista “triumfo” in Nicaragua.⁶¹ With regard to the Horn of Africa, this became even more obvious. The Ogaden war, initiated by the Siad Barre regime of Somalia, was part of a strategy to change sides from the Soviet sphere of influence into the

⁵⁹ Bernd Greiner *et al*, ed. *Heiße Kriege im Kalten Krieg: Studien zum Kalten Krieg*, Vol. 1, Hamburg 2006.

⁶⁰ Zappatelli und Trivelli, *Die schwachen Starken* 2006; Zappatelli und Trivelli, *Demobilisierung ohne Nachhaltigkeit* 2005.

⁶¹ The term “Triumfo” refers to the fall of the Somoza regime.

US American camp. The Ethiopian Mengistu regime on the other hand secured its entry ticket into the Socialist camp by abandoning the US military presence in Ethiopia. The Soviet Union sought to make use of this new strategic situation in the Horn of Africa and tried to bundle Socialist potentials in the region. To this end, a series of negotiations took place between 1977 and 1979 between representatives of the three main actively fighting Eritrean liberation fronts on the one side and the Derg on the other side, facilitated by the GDR government. The documents give clear proof that the GDR's mediation role was arranged by Moscow.⁶²

The core issue of the negotiations was the attempt to solve the conflict by promoting a solution for Eritrea's autonomy, and finally convincing the Eritrean fronts to enter an alliance with the Derg regime in order to unite the Socialist powers in the region. The SAPMO documents prove that the Sabbe faction was initially removed from the talks at the instigation of the ELF and EPLF. The further development of the talks documents an uncompromising rejection by Isaias Afwerki, and cautious tactical manoeuvring by the EPLF leadership. The breakdown of the negotiations meant the start of a war of attrition whose first victim was the old ELF of Ahmed Nasser in 1981/1982.

The regional reconfigurations of the years 1978-1980 and the period directly thereafter, concerned first of all the change of alliances, and these determined the intensity of conflicts and the extent of the perpetrated violence. In this case, however, regional reconfigurations did not include territorial changes. Whether we can trace additional reconfigurations, for example in the economic sector, and which further consequences such reconfigurations had, remains to be investigated.

2.9. A view into the Horn after 1991

This paper raises more questions than it can provide answers.

⁶² SAPMO-Archive Berlin: Coll. SED, ZK, Büro Hermann Axen, Sign.: DY / 30/IV2/2.035 - 126; SAPMO-Archive Berlin: Coll. SED, ZK, Internal party archive, Sign.: DY/ 30/J IV2/201 -1311; Second meeting of EPLF - PMVR, SAPMO-Archive Berlin: Coll. SED, ZK, Internal party archive, Sign.: DY/ 30/J IV2/201 –1311 et al.

The fact that the examples investigated here of the longstanding wars waged by liberation fronts and the subsequent restructuring of the warring societies demonstrate a series of parallels, justifies the conclusion that the “powerful powerless” or “starken Schwachen” (as opposed to the “powerless powers” implied by the “schwachen Starken”) do act beyond the planning of the super powers and can bring about developments with global effect.

The case studies examined in this chapter have shown that reconfigurations are never the result of the actions of a single party, but rather the result of a chain of interactions at different levels. Regional reconfigurations are the product of local and regional reactions to constellations of global conflict. The events of 1961, for example, are the result of an emancipation process activated by colonization and world wars and which, more coincidentally than by any form of planning, unfolded in all three regions simultaneously. The occurrences of the year 1975 are partly the result of a worldwide analysis of postcolonial wars of independence in the wake of events in Vietnam and partly the result of military pressure in the respective regional contexts. Then again, the events of 1977–1980 illustrate how global pressure may evoke auto dynamics which result in long-lasting, fundamental changes in local structures.

A further global caesura between 1989 and 1991 initiated reactions with sustainable consequences. The dissolution of the blocs and the accompanying erosions set in motion regional reconfigurations in all three areas under investigation, this time also including territorial changes.

What has been observed in the Horn of Africa since 1991? Sonja Heyer evaluated the war in Somaliland in the 1990s as follows: “This is a go home war and your clan is your address,”⁶³ thus expressing two principal factors which moulded the first decade after the decay of the blocs. Firstly, the new global constellation favoured a push factor to end hostilities, which was extremely distinctive in Somalia, but also applied to the war zones in rest of the Horn: wars ended owing to the fatigue of the combatants. It also laid the foundation for a tendency

⁶³ Sonja Heyer: „This is a Go-home-war and your clan is your address“: Shifting Identities in the Somaliland War 1995/95“, in: Living in Wartime – Living in Post-Wartimes. Proceedings of an International Workshop on the Horn of Africa, held in Melsungen/Germany, January 29-31, 1999, Ed. Hartmut Quehl; Felsberg 2002.

which constituted the antithesis to this same attempt at unipolarization and its aftermath: local centrism as a response to global challenges.

But what situation do we find in 2013? What has changed or developed? I would like to conclude by summing up some points in an attempt to assess the situation in the Horn of Africa.

The erosions in the Horn of Africa between 1991 and 2000 seemed to point out that territorial reforms would be accepted in the case of Eritrea, but should not be considered as a precedent which could be transferred to Somalia or Sudan. Eritrea and Ethiopia at that time represented a generation of “New African leaders” who could guarantee stability in the face of a perceived Islamist threat in the Sudan and the warlord chaos in Somalia.

After the failure of the US intervention in Somalia there were serious indications that this part of the region was written off as an “ungovernable zone” whose partial pacification should remain the task of the regional strongholds of stability – i.e. Eritrea and Ethiopia. Even the second Ethio-Eritrean war of 1998-2000 did not change this constellation. On the contrary: in the aftermath of 9/11 this strategy of relying on Eritrea and Ethiopia was approved in equal measure, but now primarily as bulwarks against the “Islamist terror.”

The Somali example in particular showed that fragmentation was first of all the result of a process in which identities could take shape in the form of quasi-statal entities, and that on this level new territorial entities could even be created. To a certain extent we can understand this “local centrism” as an element of resistance against the confusing changes in the global setting and their influence on the local communities.

It remains unclear in which direction this “fragmentation from below” will lead. Today, more than 20 years later, we have to evaluate whether this assessment is still valid. The years following 2011 have brought changes where the post-1991 complex of regional reconfigurations can be seen in a different light:

1. The division of Sudan via referendum has suspended the international dogma of territorial integrity. We will have to observe whether this development will have consequences on the situation in Somalia and Ethiopia.
2. Fragmentation remains a prominent pattern in the Horn of Africa even after two decades. We will have to observe whether such fragmented entities will stabilize themselves sustainably and whether fragmented entities are able to survive in the long run. The investigation of forms of local centrism remains an important task.
3. To date, all political and economic processes in the Arab world have sooner or later had a direct impact on the Horn of Africa. We will have to observe to what extent the Arabian revolution of recent years will influence the states in the Horn.
4. It remains furthermore to be observed how the problem of corruption develops, which exists in all regions in equal measure.
5. Finally, there is the state of organized crime. It remains to be seen how organized crime will develop as it already constitutes a factor of growing importance in the politics and economy in all three regions.

CHAPTER THREE

OROMO SECESSIONISM IN THE BROADER CONTEXT OF THE HORN OF AFRICA

Jan Záhorský

Abstract

The region of Oromia belongs to one of the most important as well as the most fragile parts of the contemporary Horn of Africa. The reasons for this statement are various, including historical, economic, political and socio-cultural. The Oromo people are the most numerous in the Horn of Africa and Oromo nationalism is one of the most sensitive issues of contemporary socio-political development in Ethiopia. Recently, several Oromo organizations in the diaspora, mostly via Internet, have taken the opportunity to call for an independent Oromia, while Ethiopian communities find themselves in a narrowing political space destructively managed by the late Prime Minister Meles Zenawi. Some of the Oromo leaders and intellectuals claim that the independence of Oromia should be a natural option comparable to the independence of Eritrea. This paper will examine the problems and limitations associated with Oromo nationalism and its contribution to a decreasing level of political stability in Ethiopia, especially in the broader comparative context including Eritrea, and/or Somaliland. I argue that a huge number of different strategies and opinions exist in relation to Oromia within the Oromo community, both in and outside Ethiopia and that this makes it complicated for the international community to comprehend the worsening socio-political situation in Ethiopia. The question of Oromia is, on the other hand, completely linked to the general debate concerning the so-called federal nature of contemporary Ethiopia. The paper will thus analyze and examine opinions for and against the existence of Oromia within the context of political instability in the Horn of Africa.

Key words: Ethiopia, Oromia, nationalism, secessionism, diaspora

3.1. Introduction

For many decades, the Horn of Africa has been a synonym for political instability, conflict, oppression, marginalization, and violence.¹ Civil wars in Somalia and the Sudan, the Eritrean war of independence and the Eritrean-Ethiopian border war, have all contributed to a deteriorating political, and socio-economic situation in the region, which, historically, is rather different than other African regions. First, while in other parts of Africa, a heritage of European colonialism is still evident in political and socio-economic development, the Horn of Africa lacks a concrete European colonial hegemonic power. From the Nile to Mogadisho, various European powers have shaped the existence of what is now Sudan, Eritrea, Djibouti, and Somalia. As is obvious, one of the most important regional actors, Ethiopia, has never been systematically colonized by a foreign power (except for the short period of Italian occupation). Ethiopia itself is usually described as a colonizing state which makes it more difficult to make full comparisons with other regions in Africa, whether it be West Africa (with the dominant colonialism of France), or East Africa (with the hegemony of Great Britain). Second, the Horn of Africa is a region where we may find some of the most successful liberation movements in terms of both international law (official international recognition) and internal political development. Since the 1960s, the region has been affected by three stages of secessionist struggles and separatist movements. The early phase includes Southern Sudan and Ethiopia/Eritrea, which have been resolved relatively recently. In the second phase, civil war in Somalia and the internationally unrecognized independence of the Republic of Somaliland took place at the early 1990s.² The third phase, after the 1990s, has involved liberation organizations (especially in Ethiopia) which are influenced by and make use of global means of communication, including the Internet, the media, and so on. Among such movements, one may easily include Oromo nationalism, which is not easy to analyse and of which it would be misleading to consider as a unified, centrally organized and tightly controlled organization.

¹ This study is a part of grant project SGS-2012-017 (Department of History, Faculty of Arts, University of West Bohemia in Pilsen).

² For more, see Marc Bradbury, *Becoming Somaliland*, (Oxford: James Currey, 2008)

In this paper, I will focus on the case of Oromo nationalism in a comparative study of all three above-mentioned phases of separatist movements in the Horn of Africa. For the analysis, I use mostly available sources both printed and electronic, as well as interviews and observations from Ethiopia. The basic spectrum of materials is, of course, composed of the works of leading Oromo scholars in the diaspora and Ethiopia, who represent the core of Oromo nationalism.³ After a brief introduction to the Oromo people and Oromia, I will discuss the position of Oromo nationalism in a globalizing world in relation to the means of communication and the effectiveness of communication as regards readers and the Ethiopian government. Then, I will analyse the position of Oromo nationalism and the call for an independent Oromia (as proclaimed by some nationalists), in the context of Eritrea, Somaliland, and Southern Sudan. This has its internal, regional, and international dimensions, which will also be taken into consideration. One of the major aims of this paper is thus to strictly distinguish between Oromo identity based on a specific culture, history, religion, language, and Oromia as a “psychological”/ “mythical” rather than real territorial concept.

For anthropologists, territoriality is usually considered a delineation of borders and behaviour inside these borders. Political science understands territoriality in the narrower sense of territorially determined political rule. Individuals can be distinguished on the basis of their territorial *attachments* and *detachments*. The diaspora is usually characterized by a strong connection with the original homeland, though in this case it is very often an idealized or even mythical relationship, based on a “black and white” reality caused by a long-lasting detachment from the given environment. Within the diaspora, the so-called *long-distance nationalism* is the most obvious phenomenon which clearly has an ideological character.⁴

In this context, Crawford Young speaks about the naturalization of a territorial nation as a necessary prerequisite for the construction and maintenance of the integrity of the African state because within these states dozens of different societies have shared, due to the artificial

³ See, for instance, Mekuria Bulcha, *The Making of the Oromo Diaspora: A Historical Sociology of Forced Migration* (Minneapolis: Kirk House Publishers 2002)

⁴ See Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 2006)

creation of borders, the same territory but have not shared a common national mythology.⁵ Only a few African states have a shared pre-colonial history and thus a consciousness of national integrity, namely Morocco, Egypt, and Ethiopia. Some other states at least evoke an historical existence going beyond the borders of colonialism (Botswana, Swaziland, Lesotho, Tunisia, Madagascar). It is obvious that contemporary Oromo studies would question Young's premise of the national integrity of Ethiopia as it is regarded by many of the Oromo scholars as a colonial, Abyssinian domain in which the Oromo (and other people) belong to the oppressed and thus have no national "feeling." Young argues that there exist three causes or theories clarifying the maintenance of national integrity, despite the existence of artificial borders. These reasons are the following: the international refusal to accept attempts at separatism, stemming from the Charter of the Organization of African Unity and later the African Union, the absence of alternative mechanisms for defining territoriality (e.g. the ethnic principle, which has proved to be rather explosive), and the theory of rational choice, in which those political elites whose existence is tightly related to the existence of the state would have, in the case of a potential dismantling of the state, to risk too much and face a rather uncertain outcome.⁶

3.2. *The Oromo and Oromia*

The Oromo people belong to the largest of the ethnic groups in Africa, and since the 16th century they have formed an inseparable part of the history of what is now Ethiopia. Oromia, as a homeland of all Oromo people, forms a necessary part of Oromo nationalism since every nation needs to have its original homeland. The country of origin, as proposed by Braukämper, lies between "the Darassa country and the upper Dawa in the West and the Ganale valley in the east."⁷ The search for an Oromo homeland and theories regarding its origin have differed through time, at least since Enrico Cerulli, but recently, let us say, in the

⁵ Crawford Young, "Nation, Ethnicity, and Citizenship: Dilemmas of Democracy and Civil Order in Africa," in *Making Nations, Creating Strangers. States and Citizenship in Africa*, ed. Sarah Dorman, Daniel Hammett and Paul Nugent (Leiden: Brill 2007), 242.

⁶ Young, 245.

⁷ Ulrich Braukämper, "Oromo Country of Origin: A Reconsideration of Hypotheses," in *Proceedings of the Sixth International Conference of Ethiopian Studies*, ed. Gideon Goldenberg (Rotterdam-Boston: A. A. Balkema, 1980), 35.

last three decades, debates focusing on Oromia as a natural homeland for all its people have been evident in scholarly meetings, publications, and vocabulary. Recently, there have been many attempts to deeply analyze, research, and understand Oromo history in many localities throughout Ethiopia. Students of history and anthropology from Addis Ababa University (AAU) via their BA, MA, and Ph.D. theses have made a major contribution to this development, as have various scholars from AAU, including Tesema Ta'a, Tadesse Berisso, and many others. This trend corresponds to the greater value accorded to the study of oral history, which is now developing in Ethiopia.

When talking about Oromia, we should distinguish between various types of territory, and territoriality. In this text, we use three concepts of territory and territoriality. First, territory is meant to be a physical space in which a group of people lives and makes use of the material potential, thus having an emotional attachment to it. Second, territory can be defined as a political unity which creates borders between “us” and “them;” it can both unite and divide. Third, territory has gained, especially over the last two decades, a new, virtual meaning. I propose to use the new term “virtual territory” with regard to the Internet communities, mainly those living in the diaspora. This third concept of territoriality is characterized by the absence of direct contact with the physical territory itself, but implies a strong emotional attachment to it. Anderson’s long-distance nationalism is strongly related to contemporary nationalist movements, including the Oromo nationalist movement in the diaspora.

In the process of the formation of a territory as a political entity, we can distinguish between a “project of an elite,” and a “peoples’ project.” The first deals with a situation in which a political and/or intellectual elite stands at the forefront of the political (separatist/secessionist/irredentist/revolutionary) movement, aiming to establish an independent political territory. The rest of the population usually remains in the position of onlookers and passive voices. On the other hand, a “peoples’ project” can be defined by a societal and emotional attachment to such a movement, and especially the participation of large parts of society. Such participation can be manifested in various ways, from passive support to military action. In the history of Africa, Southern Sudanese and Eritrean independence movements can be regarded as “peoples’ projects.”

Since the 1960s, the Oromo national consciousness has begun to emerge and new perspectives on the thus far undisputed Ethiopian history have been presented. Words like “Abyssinian colonialism”, “ethnocide,” “conquest,” “tyranny,” “terrorist regime” and others have entered the vocabularies of social scientists and political activists. Authors with more complex and structured opinions have usually been blamed for demonizing the Oromo nationalists and vilifying the Oromo national liberation movement.⁸ The concept of Ethiopian colonialism has broadly become an accepted fact and the so called Ethiopian Empire has been put into the same category as great European colonial powers.⁹ It has been argued that the Oromo were colonized during the last decades of the 19th century and various sources have provided much and varied information regarding the reduction of the Oromo (and other non-Semitic) population due to the Abyssinian conquest. Although it is obvious that the expansion of the Ethiopian state was accompanied by conflicts, wars and battles against “the others,” it is evident that the inability to present clear and indubitable data creates an opportunity for exaggeration and over-simplification. Moreover, conflicting perspectives and the process of creating a concept of “otherness” are now necessary parts of the whole debate surrounding nationalism in Ethiopia.¹⁰

Under Imperial rule, which continued until 1974, the Oromo people were not able to publicly express their identity. Especially when it came to the language used in public places and institutions, Amharic was the only accepted language, while the use of Afaan Oromo in schools was strictly prohibited.¹¹ After the fall of the Haile Selassie regime, there was a short period of enthusiasm, which stemmed from a seemingly equal ethno-linguistic emancipation policy, manifested by the alphabetization campaign and the use of several languages in the media. However, this resulted in a political “hangover” because of the Derg’s inability to meet the needs and demands of the people in Ethiopia, regardless of their origin.

⁸ Martha Kuwee Kumsa, “Learning not to Be-come Oromo? Chasing the Ghosts Chasing John Sorenson”, in *Contested Terrain. Essays on Oromo Studies, Ethiopianist Discourse, and Politically Engaged Scholarship*, ed. Ezekiel Gebissa (Trenton: Red Sea Press, 2009), 204.

⁹ See, for instance, Gadaa Melbaa, *Oromia: An Introduction* (Khartoum: Unknown Binding, 1988); Ezekiel Gebissa, *Contested Terrain. Essays on Oromo Studies, Ethiopianist Discourse, and Politically Engaged Scholarship* (Trenton: Red Sea Press, 2009), and many others.

¹⁰ See, for instance, Merera Gudina, “Contradictory Interpretations of Ethiopian History: A Need for a New Consensus,” in *Ethnic Federalism: The Ethiopian Experience in Comparative Perspective*, ed. David Turton (Oxford: James Currey, 2006)

¹¹ Mekuria Bulcha, “The Politics of Linguistic Homogenization in Ethiopia and the Conflict over the Status of Afaan Oromo,” *African Affairs* 96, no. 384 (1997): 325–352.

Nevertheless, the 1970s and 1980s witnessed a period of enormous growth in relation to Oromo studies since many authors began to use the rhetoric of “invented” Oromo history and identity. Mekuria Bulcha states that this rhetoric “is closely connected with the erroneous belief that Ethiopia is an ancient and immutably natural identity.”¹²

In 1991, a coalition of forces defeated the regime of Mengistu Hailemariam and a new wave of enthusiasm filled the air in Ethiopia. However, shortly after the transitional period began, disagreements between the major parties (the Tigray People’s Liberation Front and the Oromo Liberation Front) took place and resulted in the isolation of the OLF. Since the beginning of the 1990s, OLF as the dominant representative of Oromo nationalism has been accused of being a terrorist organization and even today, Oromo “phobia” forms a part of the government’s struggle against political enemies. It is thus logical that under such circumstances the whole issue of Oromo nationalism has reached another level, in which it makes use of modern means of communication and extends knowledge and information about developments in Ethiopia in an easier way than was possible a couple of decades ago.

On the other hand, the last two decades have proven that the cultural emancipation of the Oromo is a visible fact. Not only are there hundreds of books being published in Afaan Oromo, but the language itself is taught at universities. Around Oromia, we can find various institutions focusing on the study and research of Oromo history, society, and language, including Jimma University, Wellega University, and Adama University. Still, for many people it is not enough and they claim that the change is only superficial.¹³ Political emancipation has to be the next step, although there is no general agreement among the Oromo intellectual and academic community as to what such political emancipation should look like, whether it should be achieved through general political reforms inside Ethiopia, or through secession. It is still the case that many Oromos are dissatisfied with the lack of development in their country as compared to some other regions. The difference is visible especially when we compare the level of development in, for instance, Awassa – the capital city of the Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples Region, and Jimma, Nekemte, not to

¹² Mekuria Bulcha, “The Survival and Reconstruction of Oromo National Identity,” in *Being and Becoming Oromo. Historical and Anthropological Enquiries*, ed. Paul Baxter, Jan Hultin and Alessandro Triulzi (Uppsala: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, 1996), 49.

¹³ Interviews in Addis Ababa, Jimma, Adama, March, and September 2012.

mention Dembi Dollo, where almost no investment has been made in the town since 1993, except for that originating from the diaspora.

Such discrepancies and imbalances, along with many other obstacles to peace and development, have created an atmosphere of frustration among the Oromo people. This may develop into a huge socio-economic crisis if the government does not react appropriately. The political situation is truly not in favour of the Oromo, which can also be attributed to the absence of a genuine Oromo political party. What seems to be the common opinion of the Oromo elite in Ethiopia is that such a political party has to be created in Ethiopia, not outside, in order to gain legitimacy. On the other hand, it does not change anything in relation to both the internal and external divisions inside the Oromo community.

3.3. Oromo nationalism in a globalizing world

One of the basic questions of contemporary Oromo nationalism is whether to use the term “secessionism” or “self-determination” or “national liberation.” Secessionism means a policy of those people or groups who maintain the right of secession from one state in order to form their own, new, state. In postcolonial Africa, secessionist movements have been surprisingly unsuccessful. This has been caused by the fact that new, postcolonial states, have desperately needed to prove their viability, with the guidance and help of the Organization of African Unity.

Despite being a part of secessionist movements, as discussed in scholarly literature, some authors tend to avoid this term and substitute it with “people’s movement,” “national struggle,” “anti-colonial struggle.”¹⁴ Single words and phrases have their own particular meaning and the use of the abovementioned terminology gives legitimacy to the whole nationalist movement and makes it understandable in the eyes of readers, supporters and followers.

¹⁴ See e.g. Assafa Jalata, “Ethiopia on the Fire of Competing Nationalisms: The Oromo People’s Movement, the State, and the West,” *Horn of Africa*, 15 (2007): 90–134.

What is generally inaccurate and misinterpreted is the positivist approach that (not only) Oromo nationalism uses in order to describe and analyze the historical development of Ethiopia. In an absolute majority of such texts, we may read stories as to how the Oromo, Sidama, or Wolayta people were oppressed and marginalized by the Amharas and Tigrayans. Usually, little or nothing is said about the situation of the rural Amharas and Tigrayans who lived in the same conditions as their non-Semitic fellows. Unfortunately, ethnic categories (Oromo, Amhara, etc.) are taken as uniform, homogeneous entities, where any kind of cooperation is strongly criticized as is the case of those Oromos who served under Menelik at the end of the 19th century. These groups are labelled as “collaborators” and are used as an example of how consecutive Abyssinian regimes acted in an evil way.

In an era of globalization, it has been the Internet which has served as the most effective means of communication. Revolutionary advances in communications have without a doubt changed and had an impact on the development of ethnic nationalist challenges towards the state.¹⁵ David Romano analyzed the impact of modern communications in the case of the Kurds. He states that the communications revolution has provided “many new opportunities for the formation and preservation of identities independent of territoriality, allowing dispossessed and stateless groups to redefine themselves and challenge dominant states.”¹⁶ On the other hand, if the Internet and other modern means of communication allow the nationalist movements to change their strategies toward the governments, then the governments, of course, use their own strategies in order to eliminate or at least lessen the access to these technologies. In many non-democratic countries, including Turkmenistan and North Korea, access to the Internet is the prerogative of only a tiny minority or the rulers, while the rest of the country stays untouched by it. In African states such as Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea or Ethiopia, access to the Internet or even mobile phones is still limited, mainly due to political reasons because the availability of these resources provides access to information of all kinds, including those regarded as anti-government.

¹⁵ David Romano, “Modern Communications Technology in Ethnic Nationalist Hands: The Case of the Kurds,” *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, 35, no. 1 (2002): 127–149.

¹⁶ Romano, 128.

Oromo nationalism, like Kurdish nationalism, has benefitted from the Internet due to several factors. Both the Kurds and the Oromo are known for their diaspora living in the West and thus having easy access to the Internet and the media. The Internet allows two important things which are essential for nationalist movements – anonymity, and simplification, since simple phrases can attract more readers than complicated analytical works. On the other hand, the situation in Ethiopia is significantly different because, as in other non-democratic regimes, the government keeps control over the Internet and the media as well as mobile phones. This makes it difficult for people inside Ethiopia to communicate with the diaspora and vice versa. Moreover, this can be seen as one of the factors which has contributed to the difference between the diaspora and its long-distance nationalism and (in my opinion) other various forms of the Oromo nationalism within Ethiopia.

One of the main voices behind Oromo nationalism, the Oromo Liberation Front, does not actually define its goals as leading to the independence of Oromia, although several statements may indicate this:

“The aim of the Oromo struggle led by the OLF is only to gain back our country that was taken away from us by force. It is not, in any way, against the rights of any other people. The OLF believes that the Oromo people win the right to self-determination and open up a venue for other peoples to achieve the same rights. After winning the right to self-determination, the Oromo people will live side by side with its neighbours in peace, equality and respect”¹⁷

Some other sources, however, clearly declare the right of the Oromo people to proclaim the independence of Oromia and call for the dismantling of Ethiopia. Inspiration is taken from the fall of the USSR, Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia,¹⁸ though a simple comparison between these entities and Ethiopia is impossible. Such a comparison could be in a certain sense

¹⁷ OLF, “Oromia Speaks,” available at <http://www.romoliberationfront.org/Publications/OSvol10Art101.htm> (accessed December 16, 2013).

¹⁸ Bahiru Duguma, “Globalization: Does it Hinder or Support the Oromo Struggle?,” available at <http://www.romia.org/tkbo/tkbo-globilization.htm> (accessed December 16, 2012).

relevant in the case of the independence of Eritrea in 1993¹⁹ but lacks the same legitimacy and consequences in relation to Oromia or other internal units of Ethiopia as these do not have historically given, internationally recognized borders which would be accepted by the international community (see below). Nevertheless, recent developments seem to have resulted in the emergence of new strategies which are available to the struggling parties, as Brigadier General Kamal Galchu, Chairman of OLF, confirms when he declares that “OLF firmly announces a non-violent removal of the dictatorial regime of Ethiopia led by the former Prime Minister Meles Zenawi. We urge all interested parties to stand together for a unified action to end Meles Zenawi's regime.”²⁰ On the other hand, some other and relatively minor Oromo organizations such as the Islamic Front for the Independence of Oromia, or the Front for the Independence of Oromia, have not given up the armed struggle against the regime of the former Prime Minister Meles Zenawi in order to establish a free state of Oromia.²¹

In the past two decades, sensitive debates and heated discussions have emerged in scholarly works and international conferences. In particular, the Oromo community in the United States has begun to work on the development of Oromo consciousness in the diaspora. The rhetoric they use is based on the “racial” differences between the Oromo and Amhara people, as this is an historically proven fact. At least some part of Oromo studies has gained a strongly political impetus. As John Sorenson puts it

“The process of learning to be Oromo is not only a cultural project but a political one. The (re)discovery of Oromo identity is consistently linked with acceptance of the programme of Oromo nationalism. Speakers continuously emphasise the importance of Oromo identity which is linked to the necessity to support the OLF rather than other organisations which claim to represent the Oromo people. No allowance is made for those who value a sense of Oromo ethnicity but do not support the OLF's nationalist programme. For example, Tilahun Gamta, speaking at the 1992 conference stated, An

¹⁹ The Eritrean case is a complicated and complex one. As Eritrea was established as an Italian colony and then annexed by Ethiopia, it is better to talk about a liberation movement or a self-determination struggle, avoiding any separatist connotations.

²⁰ Oromia/Ethiopia: OLF Declares Nonviolent Struggle Against Zenawi & His Tyrannical Regime, available at <http://gadaa.com/oduu/9485/2011/05/20/oromiaethiopia-olf-declares-nonviolent-struggle-against-zenawi-his-tyrannical-regime/> (accessed December 16, 2012),

²¹ There are many web pages with regard to these organizations and issues, easily accessible through Google.

Oromo can change his religion but not his Oromo-ness. Those who do not support Oromo nationalism are traitors”²²

Obviously, Sorenson’s work has served as an unacceptable demagoguery for many Oromo nationalists and it is in this context, not surprisingly, that his work has become the target of heated debates. Martha Kuwee Kumsa, for instance, blames him for having an anti-Oromo approach, favouring Eritrean independence while refusing the idea of Oromo self-determination.²³ On the other hand, nationalism in the diaspora does not only cover ethnic issues but is related to religion, because the Oromo community is divided into at least three parts, Christians (Catholics, Protestants, Orthodox), Muslims, and followers of the traditional Waaqefanna. This means that even the nationalist diaspora voice does not speak with a single voice.²⁴ The same can be said about the Oromo communities in Ethiopia itself because to imagine there is a unified wave of Oromo nationalism would represent a complete misunderstanding of Ethiopia’s historical and regional differences and its different links and connections which, for instance, unite at least a part of the Muslim Oromo community in the East with other Islamic societies in the Middle East, while the Oromo Christians in the West do not show any significant comprehension of Islamic revitalization (including the Oromo Muslims) in Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa in general. Basically, all the above-mentioned arguments illuminate the sharp difference between long-distance diaspora nationalism and various local forms of nationalism in Ethiopia, which do not even share the same goals (in the case of this study, the independence of Oromia).

3.4. Oromia in the context of Eritrea, Somaliland, and Southern Sudan

As already mentioned in the introduction, the Horn of Africa belongs to a region characterized by a high number of more or less successful separatist movements. Actually, Eritrea is still the only successful liberation movement in the modern and recent history of Africa. Southern Sudan is now the second one, although a comparison of both cases is at least

²² John Sorenson, “Learning to Be Oromo: Nationalist Discourse in the Diaspora,” *Social Identities: Journal for the Study of Race, Nation, and Culture*, 2, no. 3 (1996): 454.

²³ Kumsa (2009), 209–213.

²⁴ For more, see e.g. Marcus V. Hoehne and others, *Differentiating the Diaspora: Reflections on Diasporic Engagement ‘for peace’ in the Horn of Africa* (Halle: Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology, 2010)

risky. Despite being one of the most stable elements in the Horn of Africa, the Republic of Somaliland is not an internationally recognized state, but it can still serve as a good example of separatist movements in the region.

When we talk about Oromia as one of the potentially secessionist regions, we should put it into a broader comparative perspective. In 1992, Amitai Etzioni, in reaction to the fall of the Soviet Empire and the creation of new states in Eastern Europe, analyzed the relationship between self-determination, nationalism, and colonialism. The article is called *The Evils of Self-Determination*, and one of the main arguments presented is that it is “impossible to sustain the notion that every group can find its expression in a full-blown nation-state, fly its flag at the United Nations, and have its ambassadors accredited by other nation-states; the process of ethnic separation and the breakdown of existing states will then never be exhausted.”²⁵ One crucial aspect arises from Etzioni’s article and that is the misleading vision of many separatist movements that to have their own flag and head of state would definitely solve all the existing problems. If a state declares independence, it does not mean that it is going to exist in a different regional or international climate than it would without full independence. The recent case of Kosovo might be more than illustrative. When it comes to regional affairs, Eritrean independence was largely welcomed by social scientists and the international community but soon afterwards, the country had to deal with new and old realities, including tense relations with the Sudan, war with Ethiopia, international isolation, Somalia’s civil war and the Ethiopian invasion, disputes with Djibouti, etc.²⁶

Viewing the problem of Oromia regionally, one may come to the conclusion that there is not enough space for so many states in the broader Horn, including the newly born Southern Sudan, the internationally unrecognized Republic of Somaliland, and potentially the State of Oromia. Moreover, there are some international obstacles which any new separatist attempt has to face, be it a certain reluctance on the part of international organizations to support such movements with limited degrees of legitimacy, international charters or laws which make it harder for these movements to become successful. For instance, Article 23 of the African

²⁵ Amitai Etzioni, “The Evils of Self-Determination,” *Foreign Policy*, 89 (1992): 27.

²⁶ See e.g. Roy Pateman, *Eritrea: Even the Stones Are Burning* (Trenton: Red Sea Press, 1998); Gaim Kibreab, *Eritrea: A Dream Deferred* (Oxford: James Currey, 2009).

Union Charter on Democracy, Elections, and Governance says State Parties agree that the use, *inter alia*, of the following illegal means of accessing or maintaining power constitute an unconstitutional change of government and shall draw appropriate sanctions by the Union:

1. Any putsch or coup d'Etat against a democratically elected government.
2. Any intervention by mercenaries to replace a democratically elected government.
3. Any replacement of a democratically elected government by armed dissidents or rebels.
4. Any refusal by an incumbent government to relinquish power to the winning party or candidate after free, fair and regular elections; or
5. Any amendment or revision of the constitution or legal instruments, which is an infringement on the principles of democratic change of government.²⁷

Having said this, in order to create a new state, one should count on the full agreement of all interested parties, as was the case of the Sudan when the Southern Sudanese referendum came about as a result of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in 2005. Such an idea is almost impossible in Ethiopia, despite the theoretical opportunity for any federal state to proclaim independence, as written in the Federal Constitution of 1995 (The Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia). A crucial problem for Oromia when compared to other regions in the Horn of Africa is a lack of historical legitimacy in terms of historical borders, its existence as a “pre-colonial” entity, etc. In this sense, both the Republic of Somaliland and Eritrea have an “advantage” because these were established by the British and Italians as control areas for further expansion (Italy) or for strategic reasons (Great Britain) during the Scramble for Africa. During the period of civil war Southern Sudan, a seemingly blurred territory inside what is now the Islamic Republic of Sudan, made historical claims similar to those of Senegal’s Casamance, stating that the three southern provinces were administered separately by the British rulers and Southern Sudan was even supposed to become a part of British East Africa.²⁸ Oromia lacks this kind of historical heritage as the territory which is now known as the Oromia federal state was created by the Federal Constitution. A legitimate

²⁷ *African Union Charter on Democracy, Elections, and Governance*. Adopted by the Eight Ordinary Session of the Assembly, Held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, January 30, 2007, 9–10.

²⁸ Pierre Englebert, “Whither the Separatist Motive?,” in *African Guerillas. Raging against the Machine*, Mårten Bøås and Katherine C. Dunn (London and Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2007), 63.

question thus arises: Which borders should a future state of Oromia have in the event that it gains independence one day?

According to Mark Bradbury, the Republic of Somaliland was best described as a “people’s project”, and not a project of an elite, as there existed a broad political community which rejected the continuation and idea of a unitary state (Bradbury 2008, 248).²⁹ The reason was “simple” for Somaliland was shaped into a single community under the shelter of a British Protectorate, and as a result of subsequent events during the Siad Barré period, which led to Somaliland becoming detached from its southern fellows in Mogadishu. People from Somaliland, no matter from which clan identity, contributed to the process of developing and financing the state, thus providing its government with “a high degree of local legitimacy.” Even though a comparison in this case can be tricky, South Sudan witnessed a more or less similar experience as it was excluded from the initial pre-independence talks on self-determination, which together with other historical resentments and grievances led to the early formation of a secessionist movement.³⁰ Despite internal rivalries between the various ethnic groups in South Sudan (Dinka, Shilluk, Nuer, etc.), there has been an overwhelming consensus in relation to the independence of South Sudan, resulting in a referendum in which almost 99% of people voted for independence.

Eritrean independence in 1991 (de facto, and in 1993 de jure) came into existence after thirty years of a liberation struggle. Eritrea, even though religiously, culturally, and linguistically at least partly related to its bigger neighbour (when it comes to the Christian population of the highlands), was an Italian colony, with internationally recognized borders. Its existence, as a political entity called Eritrea, was from the very beginning associated with colonial dominance. Under these circumstances, Eritrea was supposed to become an independent state like any other former colony of other European powers.

When compared to other regions in the Horn of Africa, Oromia more resembles Southern Sudan than Eritrea as it has no clearly defined, historically given borders, which is, by the way, one of the reasons why there are so many low-level conflicts in the border areas between

²⁹ Bradbury, 248.

³⁰ Jok Madut Jok, *Sudan: Race, Religion, and Violence* (London: Verso, 2007), 85–86.

North and South Oromia. In the history of Ethiopia, several Oromo states existed, including Jimma Abba Jifar, Limmu Enarea, and some others but there was never an entity called Oromia, with clearly defined, internationally recognized, indisputable borders. If a new state called Oromia is established in the future, what will be the official borders? Will they be based on the current federal approach or will there be a redefinition of the historical regional borders inside Ethiopia? Would Addis Ababa (Finfinne) become a part of Ethiopia or Oromia or would it have any special status, something comparable to Brussels in Belgium? Getahun Benti, for instance, argues that the Amhara conquest of what is now Addis Ababa was intended to de-urbanize the Oromo population and that “the Amhara created a socio-cultural frontier between themselves and the Oromo.”³¹ Nowadays, Addis Ababa is a melting pot where, of course, the Amharic language is dominant but people from various corners of Ethiopia migrate there in order to find a better livelihood and jobs. Any transition of the status of Addis Ababa would be, at a minimum, complicated if not impossible as it stands as the only true metropolis in Ethiopia. These are, on the one hand, simple questions which do not need to be answered at the moment but, in the long run and in a situation where there is a regime change in Ethiopia, their importance is likely to increase.

International support for an independent Oromia is thus minimal. Even if we admit that the historical claims made by the Southern Sudanese might not have been sufficient, they had a legitimate moral value as the situation in Southern Sudan was much different because its referendum for independence came at the end of a long-lasting war and decades of absolute marginalization. Even though the region of Oromia, economically very rich and politically marginalized, can make serious claims for independence when compared to Eritrea or Southern Sudan, it is not enough. Here, we may refer once again to Etzioni’s article, *The Evils of Self-Determination*, because the situation of Oromia, despite all the negative developments which have taken place in Ethiopia, is not much different from dozens of regions or territories throughout the world, e.g. Malaysia (Subah and Sarawak), China (Uyghuristan) through Turkey (Kurdistan) to Mexico (Chiapas), where all groups claiming to be indigenous struggle for self-determination, political and economic emancipation, but rarely for independence.

³¹ Getahun Benti, “Blind without a cane” or “A blind man without a cane”? without a Cane, A Nation without a City: The Oromo Struggle for Addis Ababa,” in *Contested Terrain: Essays on Oromo Studies, Ethiopianist Discourse, and Politically Engaged Scholarship*, ed. Ezekiel Gebissa (Trenton: Red Sea Press, 2009), 151.

3.5. Conclusion

This article was not supposed to become an anti-thesis to Oromo nationalism but rather to serve as part of a discussion on the weaknesses of the movement in the broader context of the Horn of Africa. As we have seen, Oromia is not the only region which could potentially seek independence within the Horn of Africa. Despite all the claims made by representatives of Oromo nationalism with regard to the independence of Oromia, there are many weaknesses which limit the validity of these claims in a comparative perspective.

These are (1) the lack of coherence among Oromo nationalists as there exist too many discrepancies and differences between the diaspora-driven discourse on nationalism and self-determination, and the various forms of local nationalisms, as manifested by different criteria including religion or ethnicity, and which are not particularly influenced by the detached nationalism of the Oromo diaspora. The resulting (2) weakness of Oromo nationalism in this regard is the lack of international support for any separatist movement because Ethiopia is traditionally regarded as a stable country with relatively few tensions and internal conflicts, and any high-level conflict led by a desire to proclaim an independent territory within contemporary Ethiopia's borders would hardly be welcomed by the international community. Last but not least, (3) as we have seen, Oromo secessionism suffers from a lack of historical legitimacy when compared to neighbouring regions/countries. When compared to the Western Sahara, the Republic of Somaliland, not to mention Eritrea, it more resembles cases such as the Casamance in Senegal or Tuareg's Azawad in West Africa as it may, if successfully managed, only lead to a deterioration in political stability in the given region. In another words, if Oromia were to separate from Ethiopia, then it might inspire other regions to do the same, including the conflict-stricken Darfur, the politically sensitive region of Ogaden, or some other region.

CHAPTER FOUR

FROM TROUBLED HOMES TO HUMAN ORGAN HARVESTERS: THE ODYSSEY OF AFRICAN REFUGEES IN NORTH AFRICA

Mussie Tesfagiorgis

Abstract

Based on the reports and studies presented by international human rights organizations and the UNHCR, the Horn of Africa has become one of the most refugee-producing territories in the world. This study examines some of the main factors behind the refugee crisis in the Horn. Based on first-hand information, this study examines factors that are leading to critically harsh conditions faced by refugees who flee the region via Libya and Egypt. It discusses contemporary circumstances and human rights concerns of refugee communities in a selection of refugee-hosting countries within Africa.

Key terms: *displacement, Horn of Africa, human organ harvesting, human trafficking, human rights, refugees.*

4.1. Background

As in most parts of the world, migration has been one of the most important factors affecting the economic, cultural, social and political diversity in the Horn of Africa – a region comprising six countries namely: Eritrea, Ethiopia, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan and Djibouti. The contemporary cultures of the region are the result of continuous migration and immigration of peoples to and from various parts of the Red Sea region and the Arabian Peninsula. As the main economic activities of the societies of the Horn have historically been based on agro-pastoralism, movement of people has been an important means of coping with the environmental conditions of the region. Agro-pastoralism had been an economic mode since the ancient times. Even today, a great majority of peoples of the Horn depend on livestock herding and subsistence farming for a living. Except in the higher altitudes such as

the highlands of Ethiopia, the highlands of Eritrea, and riverine and low plateau landscapes of Sudan where most people depend on sedentary farming, most communities of the region who live in the lower altitudes depend on livestock herding for a living.

Human settlements are distributed all over the region. However, greater concentrations of people are to be found in the highland regions. This may generally be attributed to two factors: one, the mild climatic conditions of the highlands is convenient for settlement; second, most of the arable lands suitable for rain-fed agriculture are located in the highlands.

Concentration of populations in highland regions such as in Eritrea and Ethiopia usually result into a shortage of arable lands. In many areas of the region, conflict over land and other related resources is a common phenomenon. Although governments in the region tend to declare all land as government possession, this has not yet brought any remarkable change. For example, Eritrea's land policy (where land is owned by the government) has aggravated tensions within the society where, traditionally, land was usually owned by villages and individuals. In addition to issues related to land shortages, food security in the region is very much affected by variation in yields from rain-fed crops due to the erratic nature of rainfall. Consecutive droughts, land degradation, and other related ecological hazards also substantially contribute to this variation. The Horn of Africa is also characterized by turbulent political circumstances, and has been ravaged by decades of war. Amidst all these problems, domestic and regional migration had always been one of the coping strategies for most peoples of the Horn. In the lowlands, pastoralist communities constantly move in a seasonal rotation from one area to another in search of grazing and farming lands. Although paths of movement and migration of peoples of the Horn have been affected since the colonial period – due to the fact that colonialism created new national borders without due consideration to the economic realities of the people, and that the state imposed various means of control of movements – pastoralism remained an important economic activity in most parts of the region. Post-colonial states of the region, as in most parts of the continent, inherited highly polarized social and political orders, and then, failed to establish good governance.

4.1.1. Eritrea

Post-colonial Eritrea was federated with the feudal empire of Ethiopia. This arrangement was to bring no peaceful relationship, and as an Eritrean politician of the time is quoted as saying, “The hyena had been put with a goat and the result was obvious”¹ – Ethiopia, which had had a long-time interest in Eritrea, annulled the federal arrangement and annexed the country, and declared it as its 14th Province. As a result, Eritreans started an armed struggle in 1961, which eventually culminated in the liberation of the country after three decades of brutal war (1961-1991). With a popular referendum, Eritrea achieved its formal independence in May 1993. Between 1991 and 1998, many Eritreans returned to their homeland and resettled in their former homes while others invested capital to run businesses and enterprises in the cities and towns of the country.

The country experienced a few years of peace and stability until another destructive and brutal war with Ethiopia broke out in 1998. The war lasted until December 2000 when the two countries agreed for a peaceful resolution mediated by an international body. On the basis of this agreement, the Eritrea-Ethiopia Boundary Commission (EEBC) at the Permanent Court of Arbitration at The Hague passed its final and binding verdict in April 2002. Yet, unable to agree on the practical applicability of the ruling, the two countries remain in a tense no-peace-no-war situation. Both countries display hostile propaganda against each other; and engage in skirmishes. Because of the political circumstances that followed the first war, most of the former returnees to independent Eritrea had to seek migration out of the country again upon the start of the war in 1998. I interviewed three people who had to return to Eritrea and again re-migrated out of the country. One of my respondents claimed that he invested in agri-food (specifically, rearing chickens), but that his business went bankrupt after two years of struggling. One of the greatest obstacles he claims to have been confronted with was that the military continually raided his business in search of new recruits. This practice, commonly known in Tigrinya language as *giffa* (coercive drafting or forced military conscription), stripped away the productive manpower of these businesses, and was a common occurrence

¹ Quoted in Tekeste Negash, *Eritrea and Ethiopia: The Federal Experience*. (Uppsala, Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, 1997), p. 83.

according to most respondents.² People who were “grabbed” by the Eritrean army (be it in streets or businesses such as mentioned above) would normally be taken to military training camps, the most prominent is Sawa Military Training Centre, and would then be kept in the army for indefinite period of time. This practice apparently continues today.

In Eritrea, the no-peace-no-war situation laid a fertile ground for the establishment and strength of one of the most brutal dictatorships in contemporary world. The Eritrean government, led by a single party, the People’s Front for Democracy and Justice (PFDJ), shut down all privately owned media, detained some high-ranking officials and thousands of members of religious groups including the Patriarch of Orthodox Church, and imposed a National Service Program (NSP). Although by decree service terms in the NSP are to last 18 months, in practice the terms are effectively indefinite: Hundreds of thousands of the youth have been kept in the army for many years. No formal demobilization has taken place since the outbreak of the war in 1998. The fact that most of the working force of the country has been kept in the army implies a great loss in the agrarian economy of the country through the last years. Most villages are left with degraded human capital. As a result of the repressive political circumstances and the indefinite service imposed on the youth, Eritreans have been fleeing their country in great numbers; an “exodus” according to many authors.

4.1.2. *Somalia*

Somalia possesses the longest coastline in Africa along the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean. It holds one of the most strategic geographical areas in the international maritime commerce. Discussing political history of Somalia is out of the scope of this study, but a general overview is in order: During the colonial era, the territory was divided among the Italians, the British and the French. The Italians occupied north-eastern and southern parts of the territory, the British occupied northern and north-western parts and the French occupied what was called the French Somaliland – modern-day Djibouti. During the Second World War (WWII), the Italians in the region were defeated by British forces who then established British Military Administration over the British and Italian Somalilands in 1941. After WWII, Somalia was

² Interviews with Tekle Ande, May 21, 2011 (Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada); Ahferom Haile, July 2, 2011 (Manitoba, Canada) and Berhe Zeray July 16 (Uppsala, Sweden).

declared to be under the United Nations Trusteeship Council (1950-1960). In 1960, the two regions formed a united territory and established an independent Republic of Somalia. Under the leadership of Mohamed Siad Barre, independent Somalia was established as Somali Democratic Republic in 1969. Amidst the Cold War Era, Somalia and the whole of Horn Africa's strategic location attracted massive competition between the U.S. and USSR over geo-political influence of the region. Somalia, and also Ethiopia, continued to be heavily influenced by the Soviet Union through the 1970s and 1980s. Surprisingly, the Soviets contributed massive support to Ethiopia which was in a chronic conflict against Somalia over territorial claims, and against the liberation fighters of Eritrea. As war continued to affect the Somali economy and society, the Siad Barre regime turned the domestic political environment of the country into an outright dictatorship until it collapsed in 1989.³ The collapse of the communist dictatorship in Somalia marked a new era in the history of the country and its people – an era of intervention, clan-based warfare and despair, and ultimately state failure. To this date, Somalia suffers from various forms of prolonged conflict, the result of which has been an exodus of Somalis. Indeed, Somalia has consistently produced more refugees than almost any other nation over the last few decades, a distinction which the country has shared with Eritrea since 2001.

4.1.3. South Sudan and Sudan

South Sudan and Sudan comprise a large proportion of the Horn's landmass that is characterized by great diversity in population and environment. Before South Sudan separated from Sudan (on July 9, 2011), most of the southern part of the country were affected by prolonged conflicts inflicting massive destruction over almost every section of the population. Even after the independence of South Sudan, conflicts over resources are still paramount. The war in southern Sudan (led by an organization called Sudan People's Liberation Army [SPLA] under the leadership of Dr. John Garang) and the government of Sudan (mainly under the leadership of President Omar H. A. al-Bashir) continued for decades ravaging every economic

³ Grahame, Deborah, Yeo, Mabele, et.al (eds), *Somalia: Cultures of the World*. (New York: Marshall Cavendish Benchmark, 1996), pp. 30-32.

and socio-political artery of Southern Sudan. The war involved the conscription of thousands of child soldiers displaying the worst images of war in the continent.⁴

Sudan as a nation is not only characterized by conflicts and tensions between South Sudan and Sudan, but also by long-term conflicts in the Darfur region. Darfur established an independent sultanate for hundreds of years until it was annexed with Sudan in 1916. The expansion of the Anglo-Egyptian forces to Darfur had a remarkable impact on the region. The annexation of this region was often characterized by tensions among ethnic groups. Immediately after independence, the tensions were aggravated by a number of factors including the strict divisions of ethnic-based identities as “Arabs” and “Africans”. The “Arab” Janjaweed (“Arabized” Sudanese militiamen, but also comprising some Bedouin Arabs who were allegedly armed by the government in Khartoum) continued their attempt to establishing supremacy over the “African” populations. The tensions were aggravated by the famines of the 1980s and the war between the groups continued for several decades until it culminated in a major outbreak (which many writers consider as “The Darfur Genocide”) in 2003. As a result of the crisis in Darfur, millions of people were displaced and were forced to live in refugee camps of the neighbouring countries.⁵

4.1.4. Ethiopia

Ethiopia was one of the two African territories that escaped European colonization in the 19th century. After defeating the Italian invading army at the Battle of Adowa in 1896, the country maintained its independence until it was again invaded by the Italians in 1935. Regardless of whether it was in retaliation for the defeat in 1896, the Italian invading army inflicted massive brutalities against the local peoples of the country during the invasion. Ethiopia was occupied in 1936, and its emperor (Haile Selassie I) was forced to flee from the country and seek refuge in the United Kingdom. Until 1941, the Italians occupied the country while remnants of the

⁴ For details related to experiences of child soldiers in Sudan, see Mark Bixler, *The Lost Boys of Sudan: An American Story of the Refugee Experience*. (New York, University of Georgia Press, 2006); Santino Majok Chuor and Peter Nyarol Dut, *Lost Boys of Sudan* (a documentary film), 2003 and Dave Eggers, *What Is the What: The Autobiography of Valentino Achak Deng*. (Vintage 2006).

⁵ For more details on the war in Darfur, see: Scott Straus, “Darfur and the Genocide Debate” *Foreign Affairs*, (Jan.-Feb.2005), Vol. 84 (1), pp. 123–133; P. K. Bechtold, “A History of Modern Sudan” *Middle East Journal*, (2009), 63(1), 149 – 150; Julie Flint & Alex De Waal, *Darfur: A Short History of a Long War*. (London: Zed Books, 2006).

emperor's army reorganized themselves and continued their resistance in the form of guerrilla warfare. This resistance kept the Italians in a series of insecure positions in the Horn of Africa. As part of WWII, the Italian and British armies fought bloody wars killing each other and inflicting heavy losses over the peoples of the Horn. By 1941, the British defeated the Italian fascist forces in the region and occupied Ethiopia. The emperor who had taken refuge in Britain during the years of war now returned to his throne. Emperor Haile Selassie I ruled Ethiopia under a feudalist socio-economic environment until 1974 when he was toppled by a military junta.

In 1974, part of the Ethiopian army calling up for a revolution, organized a coup-d'état that eventually toppled the emperor. A particular military group which called itself Dergue⁶ took over power. The coming of the Dergue marked a new political era for Ethiopia and the overall Horn of Africa. From 1976 to 1977, by refuting the strong traditional bilateral relations between Ethiopia and the United States, the Dergue allied itself with the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union had been long-waiting for such a chance of relationship with Ethiopia – a “Christian” nation with a large population and much geo-political importance in the whole territory. Considering Ethiopia was the most strategic ally in the region, the Soviet Union started to provide massive support for the Dergue regime. It sent massive volume of military equipment (including warplanes such as M23s, artilleries, light arms such as AK47, tanks, and more) as well as military personnel. Ethiopia under the Dergue desperately needed such military equipment to effectively combat the Somalis in the east (in the Ogaden region) and the Eritrean liberation fighters in the north. Therefore, the impact of the Cold War was deeply felt across the Horn of Africa. Soviet involvement in the region resulted in massive flow of military equipment to the region. This fact can easily be observed in the military junkyards of the region – such as the Kagnev Station in Asmara.

The region became one of the most war ravaged territories in the world. The widespread wars resulted into hundreds of thousands of civilian deaths, destruction of hundreds of villages, disruption of the overall economy, and an exodus of war-affected civilian populations from Ethiopia, Eritrea, and then Somalia. Hundreds of thousands of Eritrean refugees crossed the

⁶ Dergue means “committee” in Ge'ez language (the classical written and spoken language of modern-day Ethiopia and Eritrea).

border to Sudan to live as refugees. Many thousands also made their way to Europe, North America and Australia to live as immigrants. Germany, Sweden, Italy, the United Kingdom and the Netherlands were among the European countries which received a large number of Eritrean refugees, while tens of thousands also immigrated to the United States and Canada. In contrast to those who escaped the region, many hundreds of thousands of refugees ended up living in refugee camps in Sudan under appalling living conditions. By 1980s, Sudan alone hosted about 900,000 Eritrean refugees.⁷

The rule of the Dergue in Ethiopia and Eritrea resulted in massive degradation of human rights. Through a series of military actions such as the “Red Terror”⁸, the regime massacred thousands of people. Thousands of Ethiopians were forcedly or willingly mobilized in the Ethiopian army to fight wars in the north and east of the country. Hundreds of thousands of these conscripts died in the battlefields leaving remarkable socio-economic disorders behind. While the Eritrean liberation fighters (led by an organization called Eritrean People’s Liberation Front – EPLF) occupied Eritrea in 1991, in Ethiopia, the Dergue regime was defeated by Tigrean liberation fighters (under the leadership of the organization called Tigrean People’s Liberation Front – TPLF). The EPLF established an independent state and government in Eritrea while the TPLF established a new government in Ethiopia – the Democratic Republic of Ethiopia.

4.2. Horn of African refugees in motion

The Horn of Africa during the post-Soviet era has been characterized by major political changes – Somalia entered into a civil war, and state collapse; Eritrea attained independence

⁷ Bettina Conrad, “We Are Prisoners of Our Dreams”: Long-distance Nationalism and the Eritrean Diaspora in Germany, unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, Faculty of Social Sciences, Hamburg University, 2010, p. 5. For more details of studies regarding Eritrean refugees in Sudan, see the following works by Gaim Kibreab, *Refugees and Development in Africa: The Case of Eritrea*. (Trenton: The Red Sea Press, 1987); “Stranded ‘Birds of Passage’? Eritrean and Ethiopian Refugees in Khartoum”, *Refuge* 10 (4): 6-12; Ready and Willing....but still Waiting. *The Dilemma of Eritrean Refugees in the Sudan*. Uppsala: Life & Peace Institute; “The Eritrean Diaspora, the War of Independence, Post-Conflict (Re)-construction and Democratisation.” In: Ulf Johansson Dahre (ed.), *In Social Anthropology, The Role of Diasporas in Peace, Democracy and Development in the Horn of Africa*. Research Report. No. 1/2007, (Lund: Media-Tryck Sociologen),pp. 97-115.

⁸ Red Terror, commonly known in the local language Amharic as qey shibir, was a phase in the Dergue rule during which a state of emergency was declared (1977-1978). During this phase, the Dergue applied extreme violence against the “opposition” victimizing in the process hundreds of thousands of innocent people.

from Ethiopia, the communist regime in Ethiopia was replaced by a new government led by the Tigrean People's Liberation Front (TPLF), and Sudan opened a new chapter in its history: the Southern Sudanese liberation struggle finally culminated in independence.

The political turmoil of the region was aggravated when Eritrea and Ethiopia went into another destructive chapter of war – the border conflict and the “no-peace-no-war” situation that followed the actual war of 1998-2000. Eritrea's political position in the Horn became critical to the stability and peace of the whole region. The country went into war with almost all of its neighbours at one point or another. It fought brief wars with Yemen and Djibouti and sustained very erratic diplomatic relations with Sudan. Skirmishes and outright conflicts between Eritrea and Sudan were also common through the 1990s. In fact, through 1994 to 1996, Eritrea repeatedly accused Sudan for instigating “terrorist” actions against the country and its leaders. The president of Eritrea (as claimed by the regime) is believed to have escaped a couple of assassination attempts organized by agents of Sudanese security (as reported in the local media, attempts of assassination were coordinated by the then interior minister of Sudan Dr. Hassan al-Turabi, and the president of the country, Omar al-Bashir). This created turbulent diplomatic relations between these countries for a number of years. Although the two governments have repeatedly emphasized that they had established amiable relations against these odds, in reality their relations remained quite erratic for many years. Eritrea claims that it played pivotal role in bringing about negotiations among Sudanese political factions in the course of the last several years in its local media while the international media remains quite silent in this regard. Indeed, Eritrea's claim of having a constructive role in the Sudan is not the only local media claim, but it also claims that it has been working hard to bring about peace in the Horn – all this despite its oppressive domestic political environment, and its great production of refugees.

Sudan, ravaged by civil war and foreign intervention, continued to produce refugees for the last few decades. Similarly, aggravated by intervention, the civilian population of mainly South Sudan greatly suffered from the impact of widespread conflict. Overall, internal developments and external interventions across the Horn of Africa created a much destabilized economic, social and political environment in the region. Crippled by the intermittent political relations of member states of the Horn, the regional organization,

Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) remains ineffective in resolving conflicts and creating an environment of peace. Except for Kenya and Uganda, which have enjoyed relative peace for the last few decades, each of the member states of this organization (Eritrea, Ethiopia, Sudan, South Sudan and Djibouti) carried out their diplomatic relationships in particularly odd ways. These persistent tumultuous circumstances, which dominated political development of the region for several decades, give rise to an exodus of the civilian population from most countries of the horn.

4.3. Refugees and human trafficking in global context

Who is a “refugee” in the first place? What are the main considerations for a person to be labelled a refugee? These are basic, but important questions for our understanding of the complex circumstances of refugees across the world. According to the amended version of the United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (CRSR), adopted by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), a “refugee” is:

A person who owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it.⁹

This definition clearly shows that genuine refugees are those who risk a “well-founded” fear of persecution upon return to their country of origin. Anyone who would not fit in this definition is known by different names in different territories – such as an “economic refugee”, or a “spam refugee”, or a “bogus refugee”, or “climate/environmental refugee”, and so on. Although not in a formal manner, these terms are increasingly being used in the literature of migration studies. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted in 1948 also clearly states that, “everyone has the right to seek and enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution” (Article 14:1).¹⁰

⁹ Article I of the 1967 Protocol to the 1951 Refugee Convention.

¹⁰ The Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In addition to the above-mentioned provisions to the 1951 Refugee Convention also clearly put in its Article 28 that refugees shall be granted freedom of movement within

Based on the accounts of the UNHCR (2011), the number of people who are considered as refugees worldwide has been estimated at 15.4 million. Great majority of these refugees (about 80 percent) are from the “developing world”.¹¹ Additional displaced people in war-torn regions of the world are estimated at 43.7 percent.¹² Great numbers of these refugees live in appalling living conditions in refugee camps across the globe. Most of them live with a dream that one day when peace returns to their respective homes, they will also return – to the “sweet home” as one of my respondents put it.¹³ Although most of them nurture this dream on an everyday basis, many of these refugees end up living in refugee camps for decades. Examples include Eritrean refugees in Sudan, many of whom have been living there for over two decades. Indeed, the number of refugees on the planet continues to grow rapidly, and this has created a great concern among nations in the “developed world” and United Nations agencies, where the former have continued to sharpen their policies of immigration in a way which has become increasingly resistant of immigrants.

Refugees are among the most vulnerable sections of the world population. The United Nations Office on Drug and Crime (UNODC) report (2012) estimates the number of people who are victimized in the form of forced labour, sexual exploitation, organ harvesting, and other crimes at 20.9 million.¹⁴ According to UNODC, “...at least 136 different nationalities were trafficked and detected in 118 different countries”, which confirms that human trafficking takes place globally in a magnitude which is beyond imagination.¹⁵ Human trafficking generates many billions of dollars for the perpetrators, but unbearable pains for the victims. Quite often, it is common to hear horrible stories that take place in refugee camps, as

and outside the states where they seek asylum. It states: “The Contracting States shall issue refugees lawfully staying in their territory travel documents for the purpose of travel outside their territory...”

¹¹ Estimates as published in the UNHCR: World Refugee Day. UNHCR Report June 20, 2011: <http://www.unhcr.org/4dfb66ef9.html> (accessed on May 30, 2013).

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Araya Efreem (interview in Frankfurt, Germany: May 12, 2009). Araya exclaimed during the interview: “To me, there is no home than the home you lose when you become a refugee. The actual home is the sweetest place to live, although some new refugee homes like mine are great homes as well. But I wonder how sweeter this home may be for those who have my current home as their home of origin – a place where there is rule of law!”

¹⁴ UNDOC, Global Report on Trafficking in Persons, New York, United Nations, p. I. This report is also available online at:

http://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/glotip/Trafficking_in_Persons_2012_web.pdf (accessed on June 1, 2013).

¹⁵ Ibid.

refugees are among the most prone sections of global population who might fall into the hands of human traffickers. Despite the intensity of human trafficking-related crimes, the number of convictions against perpetrators is comparatively far smaller; almost non-existent. This is a worrisome trend, and so the prospect of ending human trafficking-related crimes seems nearly hopeless. Unless the international community adjoins hands and combat this problem, the crimes may continue to uncontrollable stage. Contemporary human trafficking crimes are affecting thousands of people in the developed world as well. In Canada and the US, crimes related to human-trafficking continue to grow.¹⁶

4.4. The exodus and the refugee camps in the Horn of Africa

Many refugees from countries of the Horn usually consider the troubled neighbouring states of the region as primary or transitional destinations. From these states, many intend to migrate further towards different global directions. As most of these troubled states do not respect the basic rights of their citizens, such as freedom of movement, religion and expression, most of these refugees risk their lives when crossing their national borders. Many of them escape state policies such as that of Eritrea's "shoot-to-kill" policy against people who cross the borders illegally.¹⁷ Of course, many of these genuine refugees also get killed on the border areas by armed squadrons. Many are also apprehended and have been detained for several years – many languish in unspecified detention centers. Further, many other refugee victims fall in the hands of criminals who would abuse and exploit them in inhuman circumstances – including mass practice of enslavement, rape, and organ harvesting.

Once the refugees arrive in refugee camps in any of the neighbouring countries, they often encounter appalling living conditions. For example, although Ethiopia offers remarkable help for Eritrean refugees, those who lived in the Refugee camps of Shimelba and Mai Ayni complain of lack of freedom of movement and lack of sufficient food supplies. Many Somali

¹⁶ Example, in the context of Canada, see reports of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), Human Trafficking in Canada: A Threat Assessment, posted online: <http://www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/pubs/ht-tp/htta-tpem-eng.htm> (accessed on June 1, 2013).

¹⁷ Most refugees leave the country illegally simply because the country does not provide any sustainable policy of immigration. It normally does not issue passports and visas for young Eritreans regardless how long they provided their service to the state – usually in the form of national services (for indefinite period of time).

refugees who made their way to refugee camps in Kenya complain of similar circumstances. Refugees in the Shegerab Refugee Camp in Sudan complain of various problems, including critical security issues. These refugees who flee their country to save their lives often come to refugee camps without having any property or capital. Apart from the limited help offered to them by the UNHCR and the International Committee of the Red Cross, these refugees are left to live under appalling life conditions. Also, about three-quarters of my sample respondents claim that the UNHCR did not do enough to help them in critical refugee conditions in refugee camps in Shegerab and other camps in the Horn. For example, it was stated to me by many of my respondents that many refugees have been living under appalling conditions, and are languishing in refugee camps in Djibouti, Shegerab, and prisons in a number of detention centers in Egypt and Libya. Among the most disadvantaged refugees according to my respondents are those who are living in conditions almost comparable to prison camps in Djibouti. Many of these refugees not only encounter food shortages, but also contagious diseases, predominantly tuberculosis (TB). In the face of the crisis of Horn of Africa refugees in Djibouti, Ethiopia, Sudan, Libya, Egypt, and Israel; the UNHCR, the United Nations, and the international community at large seems to have failed in fulfilling its obligation to protect these victimized refugees, according to my respondents.

Hundreds of thousands of Eritreans are living under desperate conditions. For example, out of the about 17,000 refugees living in Shimelba, over two thousand are orphan children whose parents have died, often in the Eritrea-Ethiopian border wars. Many of them also left their homes for fear of persecution or in search of a better life. The refugees in Ethiopia also comprise large number of households who live under destitute conditions. Many communities who live in the border areas, particularly the Kunama and the Afar communities are among the most vulnerable refugee communities. Although the US, Canada, and other European countries attempted to help and resettle these poor refugees, the current quota of refugee resettlement program has only solved a tiny part of the problems of Eritrean refugees in Ethiopia. The same remains for the Eritrean, Somali and Ethiopian refugees in the Sudan.

The worst challenges in refugee camps such as in Sudan and Egypt are not only the common crimes such as rape, robbery and refoulement, but also human trafficking and human organ harvesting.¹⁸ Based on the Refugee Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees:

No Contracting State shall expel or return (“refouler”) a refugee in any manner whatsoever to the frontiers where his life or freedom would be threatened on accounts of his race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social or political opinion (Article 33).

Despite this legal framework, many signatory states have been freely deporting refugees to their homes of origin where they have well-founded fear of persecution. As we shall see below, Libya, Sudan and Egypt have been among the few countries which exercised such a practice of refoulement of refugees from the Horn of Africa.

Since about 2005, many refugee camps in the Sudan have been infested by human traffickers and outlaws with unbearable tentacles of exploitation. In the following sections, case studies are presented of Eritrean refugees in the Sudan, Egypt, Libya and Sinai. The following accounts were gathered through intensive oral history interviews with direct victims who eventually had arrived in North America and Europe. The accounts and analysis are based on conversations with 33 people whom I interviewed between 2007 and 2012 in many parts of Europe and North America.

Once they arrive in refugee camps, such as the Shegerab Refugee Camp in Sudan, Horn of Africa refugees normally register themselves as refugees in UNHCR offices and are required to formally apply for asylum. However, as refugees with genuine fear of persecution back home, most of these people do not get the needed asylum protections and then continue to live in appalling conditions in the refugee camps. Many become victims of outlaws and traffickers.

4.4.1. *Refugee life in the Shegerab Camp in Sudan*

¹⁸ According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), *Refoulement* “means the expulsion of persons who have the right to be recognized as refugees. The principle of non-refoulement has first been laid out in 1951 in the UN-Convention relating to the Status of Refugees as provided in Article 33(1): UNESCO: <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/social-and-human-sciences/themes/international-migration/glossary/refoulement/> (accessed on May 12, 2013). Forced repatriation of a genuine refugee (refoulement) is illegal on the bases of international law and the UN-Convention on Refugees.

Located in eastern Sudan, Shegerab Refugee Camp is one of the biggest camps in the Horn of Africa. This camp was opened in the late 1960s, and has been receiving tens of thousands of refugees from the region. Eritrean refugees in Sudan alone are estimated to number about 100,000,¹⁹ and this camp hosted a great majority of Eritrean refugees. Many refugees in the region now use the refugee camps as transit sites during their struggle to migrate to other destinations where they dream of a peaceful and progressive life. Before outlaws (Rashaida²⁰ and Bedouin traffickers) infested this camp, it used to be a second home for many thousands of refugees from the region.

Most refugees, who have “illegally” crossed borders into eastern Sudan from Eritrea or Ethiopia, are received at the Shegerab Refugee Camp where they are expected to receive formal protection. The UNHCR supervises the situation of refugees in the camp. However, as mentioned above, based on stories of refugees who had been in the camp since 2007, refugee life in the camp has increasingly been threatened by a number of challenges, including intensified organized and non-organized criminal acts such as rape, murder, arrests, robbery, kidnapping and human organ harvesting. All in all, Shegerab Refugee Camp in Sudan has become increasingly unsafe for the refugees in the region. Desperate to live in a better secured environment, many of the refugees are usually compelled to leave the appalling conditions of the camp and make their way to some of the biggest cities in the country – mainly Khartoum.

Within Khartoum, the struggle for attaining a refugee space is paramount. Hence, the spatial distribution of Horn of African refugees in the city is spread in pockets across different

¹⁹ IRIN, Humanitarian News and Analysis, <http://www.irinnews.org/Report/93118/ERITREA-SUDAN-Refugees-battling-for-a-better-life> (accessed on May 12, 2013). The statistical figures on Eritrean vary greatly, and so the figure given here might not be an actual figure.

²⁰ The Eritrean Rashaida were originally migrants from South Arabia towards the African coasts around the 1840s. In Eritrea, they are the last immigrant ethnic group among all other eight ethnic groups in the country. Even today, unlike the Tigre or Bilen or the Kunama, this ethnic group is the least integrated in the country. Other ethnic groups of the country do not know much about this group apart from a few facts that they are the only mother-tongue Arabic-speakers and that they depend on nomadic pastoralism and lucrative transnational trade in the region. For their involvement in human trafficking, see Meron Estefanos, Bedouin Rashaida: The Human Traffickers in North-East Africa, published at: <http://asmarino.com/articles/958-eritrea-bedouin-rashaida-the-human-traffickers-in-north-east-africa> (accessed on May 31, 2013). Based in Sweden, Meron is a human rights activist who conducted intensive interviews with many victims, and has published a number of articles on the subject and that she also continues to expose refugee crisis in North Africa and the Middle East. On some basic facts about the Eritrean Rashaida, see also Mussie Tesfagiorgis, Eritrea: Africa in Focus. (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2010), p. 178.

residence areas. On the basis of accounts of refugees during this research, however, the residence quarter called Dem is by far the most populated quarter – mostly by Eritrean, Somali and Ethiopian refugees in Sudan. While the relatively lucky refugees manage to enter Khartoum or Port Sudan where they struggle for survival, the least fortunate ones usually fall in the hands of criminal gangs – who kidnap them, sell them, and often harvest their organs.²¹ The Shegerab camp, according to two of my respondents who managed to arrive in Canada in 2013, has formally been a ground for many sorts of brutalities, such as daylight kidnapping of young men and women refugees since 2012. Although refugees continue to cry for help from the government of Sudan, no substantial help has been forthcoming. The crime that is involving this refugee camp is part of a highly intricate business in which a number of Sudanese authorities are also rumoured to have been involved. Some of the interviewees mention that Eritrean notables such as military commanders are involved in this inhuman business of human trafficking and human organ harvesting. In fact, the UN Monitoring Group did also acknowledge this fact and identified a particular Eritrean commander known as Manjus (General Teklay Kifle Manjus) as being involved in this regional business.²² In sum, Shegerab Refugee Camp is increasingly growing as one of the most dangerous sites for genuine refugees of the Horn of Africa; the refugees are knocking on the doors of the UNHCR, desperately awaiting the goodwill of the international community.²³

²¹ According to great majority of my respondents, most of these criminal gangs belong to a particular ethnic group called Rashaida. The Rashaida are found in Eritrea (less than 2.5%), Sudan (less than 0.1%), Egypt (less than 0.1%) and Libya (less than 0.5%). The population size figures given above are based on rough estimations. The figures presented in varieties of literature are inconsistent – mainly because they are based on estimations only.

²² UN Security Council, from the Chair of the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions 751 (1992) and 1907 (2009) concerning Somalia and Eritrea addressed to the President of the Security Council (Letter dated 11 July 2012).

<http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/Somalia%20S%202012%20545.pdf> (accessed on May 17, 2013).

²³ For references on human rights situation in Eritrea, see Sheila B. Keetharuth, Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Eritrea, UN Human Rights Council, Twenty-Third Session, Agenda Item 4, May 9, 2013. This report is available on the internet at:

http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/HRCouncil/RegularSession/Session23/A.HRC.23.53_ENG.pdf (accessed on May 30, 2013).

4.5. Facing the desert, the sea and the sun!

In my former book²⁴ I used the above sub-title to express some attempts of migration by Eritrean refugees from Sudan to Europe. When I used the above sub-title, the situation was not, as it is, well exposed now; it has now been described by many sources including refugee voices and international media outlets such as CNN and BBC. These outlets have been documenting critical conditions of Horn of Africa refugees, and have given wider coverage to the critical conditions of the refugees. This title, I believe, would be most applicable to the contemporary paths and circumstances of Horn of Africa refugees in North Africa and the State of Israel.

4.5.1. Refugees in Libya

Desperate because of their circumstances in the refugee camps in Sudan and Ethiopia, many members of the refugee communities take another life-threatening action: crossing the Sahara Desert to arrive at Libya, through which they travel to Italy; arriving instead in Egypt to make their way to Israel. Unfortunately, many of them experience terrible hardships, including being cheated and chased by human smugglers (who somehow have become outlaws in the lucrative human trafficking business); or having the boats and ships they indented to travel with to Europe being shipwrecked in the Mediterranean Sea; and so on. The demands of traffickers often go beyond the limits of the troubled refugees. As we shall see below, it has been repeatedly reported by refugees that traffickers apply brutal treatments against victims including robbery, rape, torture, killing as well as extracting organs such as the kidneys, the eyeballs and the liver. Against all odds such as these, refugees continue to escape destitution in various camps in Sudan, Libya and Egypt. These poor refugees take actions such as attempting to cross the Mediterranean in boats which are technically not even equivalent to the Dhows of ancient East African Swahili traders.

Libya during the Gadhafi regime and Egypt under the Mubarak and the current regimes, owing to their cordial relationship with the leaders of the government in Eritrea, mistreated

²⁴ See Eritrea: Africa in Focus. (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2010), p. 320.

and deported many Eritrean refugees. However, it is not only Eritrean refugees who have been mistreated in Libya; all refugees from Sub-Saharan Africa suffered from such maltreatments. This was well-documented by international media such as Aljazeera and others during the Libyan “revolution” at which time sub-Saharan refugees were mistreated – not only by the Gadhafi regime but also by the unorganized “revolutionaries” who often baselessly looked down at these refugees as mercenaries of the Gadhafi regime. The perceptions of the revolutionaries were displayed in images of horror in media outlets, such as YouTube videos.²⁵ During the “revolution” in Libya, it was quite common to see victimized refugees in civilian clothes as “mercenaries of Gadhafi” clearly demonstrating stereotypes against black Africans in the country. Despite the loud cries of these refugees, the international community was more engaged in the political and military affairs of the country rather than addressing the appalling circumstances of African refugees in Libya. Only few European countries, namely Norway, Sweden and Switzerland attempted in a limited extent resettlement of highly vulnerable refugees during the crisis. Many refugees languished in prisons as well as in open fields overrun by outlaws.

According to my respondents, and to the contrary of the UN Refugee Convention, these countries (Libya and Egypt) detained and deported refugees to their countries of origin in sub-Saharan Africa without due respect to international law. A tiny minority of refugees who were deported to Eritrea safely left the country in a second escape and have been able to and expose their horrendous experience in detention camps of Eritrea such as in Nakura, Dahlak, Aderser, Adi Abeyto and Metkel Abyot. Asked to narrate his experience in the Nakura Prison in Eritrea, one of my respondents who was deported from Libya to Eritrea replied: “I am willing to tell that horror only to God, not to any human being”; and he refrained from giving me further details on the subject. Such people are the few lucky ones who survived shipwrecking in the Mediterranean, and survived the consequences of deportation to Eritrea.

²⁵ The Libyan “revolution” was accompanied by racist images against black Africans. The following links are some few of the many reports and images of horror displayed in the world media: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5wtuWsbQ9u4> (accessed May 27, 2013); <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7RSsGyYPeYY> (accessed on May 27, 2013); <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MxnVSuCDqE8> (accessed on May 27, 2013); and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MxnVSuCDqE8> (Aljazeera, accessed on May 27, 2013).

It has also been repeatedly reported by human rights activists that many Eritrean, Ethiopian and Sudanese refugees were killed by Egyptian guards at the border between Egypt and Israel.²⁶ As stated above, many of those who attempted to escape from Libya by boats and ships arranged by smugglers have lost their lives in the Mediterranean Sea. In one incident alone (March 2011) over 320 Eritrean refugees were shipwrecked in the Mediterranean Sea – all died in the sea.²⁷

Increasingly, most refugees in Libya have also been victimized by Libyan authorities. Hundreds of them are living in prisons, having been there for unknown periods of time. According to respondents, Eritrean refugees in Libya are among the most unwelcome ones. They are robbed in the streets, they are grabbed on the streets and put in prison indefinitely and some are deported back to Eritrea. The same treatment often applies to Eritrean refugees in Egypt.

The following is an excerpt from an interview with an Eritrean refugee named Andom who survived brutalities in Libya during his attempt to migrate to Europe. I find Andom's story representative of most of the accounts of Eritrean and other Horn of Africa refugees who travelled through Libya during their process of migration, as narrated to me during this study.²⁸

Andom was born in a small village in northern Eritrea. He attended elementary and secondary school in his locality, and then he was admitted for higher education at the University of Asmara. Before being admitted to the university, he had to fulfil the required military training at the Gahtelay Military Training Centre. He accomplished his first year studies at the university, but then, given to his personal circumstances, he withdrew from the university.

²⁶ Example, of such publications is by Advocates for the Persecuted (AMI): <http://advocatesforthepersecuted.org/index.php/stories/3074.html> (accessed May 24, 2013).

²⁷ The number of deaths other than those related to Eritrean refugees have not been available during this research. But it is assumed that many hundreds of refugees from West Africa and Central Africa also died during attempts to escape to Europe.

²⁸ Very similar stories were also narrated to me by respondents: Hagos K. (interview, Dec. 27, 2011); Mussie T. H. (interview, February 13, 2013); Tesfazgi T. (interview, January 2012); Yemane G. (interview, July 16, 2012); Yonas H. (interview, May 2, 2011); Tesfazgi T. (interview, January 2012); Michael H. (interview, May 12, 2011) and Zerzgi K. (interview, Feb 15, 2013). Please note that last names of respondents are purposely kept as an initial rather than complete names – based on interviewees' wish.

Asked to narrate his experience of migration from Eritrea to Canada, Adom states that he paid a smuggler to cross the Eritrean border to Sudan, and eventually arrived in Kassala. He states that he wished to escape desperate conditions in Eritrea and wished to establish a better life anywhere else. He mentions that he did not have any specific destination when he left his country. Once he arrived in Kassala, he states that the personal safety of refugees was vulnerable. The UNHCR was present in the refugee camp near Kassala where he went to for protection. Hence, he had to proceed to Khartoum. In turn, desperate to escape the conditions in Khartoum, in April 2006 Adom explains that he decided to leave Khartoum for Libya. He then contacted a smuggler and paid him money to have himself smuggled to Tripoli, Libya. When describing the actual travel:

... Once I arranged the journey with the smuggler, I and my family (wife with a baby) were taken by car from Khartoum and travelled for a day and night to a place I do not know. In that place, we paid the smuggler from Khartoum (200 US dollars per head). The smuggler from Khartoum transferred us to a Libyan trafficker who asked us to pay 300 US dollars per head. We paid him. But in the meantime, the same smuggler informed Libyan police about us who then threatened us and asked us to pay them money. We raised money from each refugee and paid them 1000 US dollars. Then, we were loaded on another car with armed crew who wanted to abuse some of the refugee women who were travelling with us – we resisted. After such a confrontation, they took us to the city of Kufra and then to Ajdabiya where we were received by a person called Abd Salam. The whole journey from Khartoum to Kufra took us 15 days. The journey was unspeakable. Forty people were loaded in a small car (pick-up). During the whole journey, everyone had to obey to whatever the smugglers would order...All the travellers were loaded over the items carried by the same car. They do not give you any food, you have to get your own food. They put a bit of fuel in the drinkable water, and in such a way, they limit you from drinking much water at a time. Abd Salam (apparently the brother of the mayor of the city at that time) asked us to pay 300 US dollars if we wanted to travel to Tripoli. I refused. He told me that because I had a baby, he would understand my situation and would help me get to Tripoli if I paid him only 150 US dollars. I paid, and all refugees in that round were transported to Misrata where we were again asked to pay additional 100 US dollars to travel to Tripoli. We were then transported to Tripoli. Those who wanted to travel from Ajdabiya to Bengazi were asked to pay 150 US dollars... We realized that we were in fact sold from one smuggler to another. All of them demanded money from us.

As we entered in Tripoli, we realized that the government would not recognize us as refugees. The government authorities would detain, deport or threaten you if you were caught in the streets of Tripoli. Life in Tripoli was so hard. There was no means of income unless you depended on family members in the diaspora. To get work in the city was almost impossible...Refugees were detained in many detention centres such as Fellah prison in Tripoli...The worst detention condition in Tripoli was if you were caught in *mezra'a* [waiting stations when attempting to leave the country]

... During the first week of my arrival, I was caught by Libyan youth in a street in the city, and I was badly beaten by these people. They demanded that I give them money, but I did not have any...The Eritrean embassy did not provide any help to those Eritrean refugees who were abused in that country...²⁹

After living in Tripoli for several months, Andom decided again to try his chance to migrate further to Europe. Hence, he paid smugglers to help him cross the Mediterranean Sea. However, the smuggler could take only his wife and child at that moment. Andom's family attempted to cross the Mediterranean while Andom had to wait for the next round. They were not successful, however. Their boat sank after sailing for about an hour, but miraculously both survived.

The travel was during the night... My wife paid 1200 US dollars... The smugglers were Eritreans and Libyans. Luckily, my wife and others had to wear life jackets right before the journey started. As the boat was sinking, it rolled and turned in an upside down position. In that situation, two refugees were killed. My baby son floated over someone who wore a life jacket. My wife floated in the sea as most refugees in that boat did, and they did not receive help until the next afternoon... Some tried to swim to the coast, many of them were, however, badly injured. In the afternoon of the next day, the Libyan soldiers who cooperated with the smugglers came, now with military uniforms; and saved these refugees. My son and wife also survived this accident...My wife was then detained and they sent her to prison in Kufra. She was pregnant at that time. I managed to bring her to Tripoli by paying money.

For the second time, the smuggler agreed to take us to Europe with some additional payment. We paid, and he put us in *mezra'a* for a month or so. There we lived under destitute conditions; our bodies were overrun by lice, and suffered from hunger. He then moved us to a different place where the police found out where we were. My wife insisted that I escape right when the police were approaching us ... She could not escape with us because she was pregnant. I left her there with my son, and she was detained. While the others were taken to Kufra, my wife and a couple of other women who claimed to be ill were left in prison located at the town of Zelet'ien. In the meantime, a new order was passed by the government and all detained refugees were brought to a detention centre called Merji. From there, the authorities planned to deport the refugees to their homes of origin. My wife was taken to Ajdabiya, then to Merji and then to Misrata prisons where she was detained for a year and half... I tried to keep contacts with my family in the prison via telephone once in a while. I had no income and could not help her at all; and all was a disaster for me. She then delivered in the prison. I tried to tell my problem to the personnel of the UN and many others; nothing worked. Around the mid-2007, Elsa Chyrum³⁰ created contacts with the UN and then they finally contacted us. Then, in around September 2007, I got a survival job. In the meantime, the UN informed my wife to fill forms of resettlement. She did fill those forms and that she started to get some assistance from the UN. She received a form of choice as to where she would like

²⁹ Interview with Andom Abraha (last name advertently changed; 05 May 2011).

³⁰ Elizabet Chyrum (commonly known as Elsa Chyrum) is one of the renowned Eritrean human rights activists. She is the founder and leading figure of Human Rights Concern-Eritrea (HRCE).

to be resettled, and she also asked me to choose. We chose Canada, and then in December or January (2007-2008) we received a feedback. We were asked to do the needed procedures for the process. In April 2008, we were resettled in Canada through the help of the UNHCR. Thanks be to the Lord, we are now doing good!³¹

One of my respondents, Weini Debesay, was with the group of refugees (including Andom's wife) whose boat sank in the Mediterranean. Weini Debesay narrates heartbreaking stories of her survival in the Mediterranean Sea. She claims that she survived shipwrecking three times and served years of detention in different detention centers of Libya. The following is an extract from Weini Debesay's narrative:

I left Eritrea in 2004...because I did not want to be taken to Sawa. I left for Sudan by paying money to a smuggler. My travel to Sudan was relatively not a troubled one. I entered Sudan where I stayed for ten months – in Shegerab Camp, Wad Sherifey Camp, Gerba and Khartoum. Life is terrible in Shegerab and all Sudan. There was no adequate food, and if you do not have money, you are done... life is unbearable there. Many women were kidnapped from the Shegerab Camp. Life is relatively better in Khartoum than in the refugee camps.

Then, I decided to leave for Libya through which I intended to go to Europe. I contacted smugglers and then I paid money to be smuggled to Libya – about 800 USD. I was taken from Khartoum to Omdurman where I was kept for three days. During these days, we were not provided with food and water, and I was starving. Then, we departed for Libya through the Sahara. The travel was accompanied by scorching heat and dust. Many people died on the way. In the middle of the Sahara, the smugglers halted and demanded for more money from us [refugees]. We paid, and then continued our way to the town of Kufra in Libya after travelling for ten days. In Kufra, they demanded for more money from us, and locked us in a cage-like hut. We suffered from hunger and heat. There, we were sold to another smuggler who would take us to Ajdabiya where he would sell us to another smuggler who would take us to Tripoli. During all the process of travel, the smugglers kept us in strict control, and always demanded for more money from us. When they smuggled us, they put us at times in between vegetable baskets on a top of a truck or in empty gas containers in which life is difficult to maintain. After traveling through all these troubles for a number of weeks, I arrived in Tripoli.

I stayed in Tripoli for a month before I attempted crossing the sea for the first time. In August 2005, I took my first attempt to cross the sea. I paid money and then was taken to the coast where I, along with many hundreds of refugees had to wait for three days until the smuggling ships arrived. The stay in *mazra'a* was accompanied by hunger and inadequate water – it was really appalling. I was kept along with about 800 people at the coast until two ships arrived to take us. They took us aboard and started sailing across the sea. However, the captain lost his direction, and we had to float all over the sea for three days until Libyan guards arrived and captured us. During all the days of stay in the sea, we had no food, no water. Believe me, we ate *ma'ejun* “tooth paste or Colgate”. We ate whatever was around. The seawater was salty and we could not drink from it.

³¹ Ibid.

The Libyan authorities took us by shipping containers that was characterized by blazing heat during the day. We almost died there, especially whenever the trucks stopped, the heat became unbearable. We shared our urine...you ask your next fellow refugee to give you his urine...that was the condition! We were transported in such a condition back to Kufra. In Kufra, I paid money to the guards and was smuggled back to Tripoli.

I tried again in September 2005 to go through the sea. I was taken to the *mazra'a*. After that, the ship arrived, but many children and women were thrown to the sea after we boarded...because the ship was full. I, along with another refugee had to swim all the way to the Libyan coast. Many people died, especially children and women. The Libyan soldiers started searching for survivors. I and the other refugee tried to escape, but we were caught, and were taken to prison – again by a container. I was taken to Kufra where I stayed for a month. Again, I paid money and was smuggled to Bengazi. In Bengazi, I met an Eritrean smuggler who demanded for 500 USD. I paid, and I was smuggled to Misrata and then to Tripoli. During all this, I had to request for money from my family members abroad. This was because every smuggler wanted money. You cannot do anything with those people unless you pay them money...

I stayed in Tripoli for a year without attempting for the third time. I did not have any job, and there was no money at all. In 2006, I tried for the third time. We stayed in the *mazra'a*. I, along my friend departed for Europe again. I felt very fearful this time, but my friend encouraged me. The captain of the boat was an Eritrean from the Afar ethnic group. I started crying and shivering – I felt that this was not safe one – I had a gut feeling that this was the end of it. But we had lifejackets. While sailing through the sea, the boat started filling water and eventually sank after we sailed for four hours...We struggled to survive in the sea...it was a hopeless situation. It was dark and cold. After about 17 hours struggle in the sea, only five survived this accident, including me. We, the survivors had spoiled skins, and our body was technically decaying. Some of us lost consciousness. The Libyan guards finally caught us. Although we were weakened, and close to death, they tortured us badly. Most of the other refugees died; we saw bodies lying at the coast. Among the dead was my friend... I saw my own friend dead...they took all her belongings, and covered her with a sack. I cried loud... They sent us again to Kufra. I had already sustained a big wound on my abdomen. It took long to heal by itself – there was no medical help. Once my wound was healed, I managed to escape, and begged a Sudanese family in the town to give me refuge. They offered me help and kept me for a month and transported me to Tripoli afterwards. I registered myself in a UN agency which offered help in the form of resettlement. I tried to flee for the fourth time. But, this time, I was caught before I went aboard of a ship. In the meantime, the ambassador of Eritrea came to visit us and pretended that he would help us to be released. He asked us to sign a document. He asked me to translate his speech in Tigre and Arabic languages to the fellow refugees. I did. We all signed. But, we eventually realized that the Eritrean ambassador's document, as we understood it later, was a procedure for our deportation to Eritrea. As soon as we realized this, hundreds of refugees broke out of the detention and escaped. I was caught, and badly tortured. The Eritrean ambassador personally supervised my torture. He told the Libyan authorities to torture me as bad as it was. He did so because I was the one who translated the deportation document for the refugees, and exposed the secret in all languages I could speak – loud and clear, I told my fellow refugees that we all signed a bad document – a document for our own deportation. The UN agent came to see us in the prison and I told him my situation and explained to him that I already filled the UNHCR document for resettlement. He promised to help me once I finish serving my prison term. I was detained for eight months in the town of Sirt. Then, they transferred us near Tripoli where I was detained for over a year. There were

800 men, 200 women and many children in the prison. Those women who were pregnant had to deliver in the prison. The UN agents frequented visiting us in the prison. A Canadian agent came and interviewed me for a short time, and he finalized my resettlement process. I was then, thanks be to the Lord, resettled to Canada.³²

4.5.2. Refugees in Egypt and the Sinai

Another troubled journey to freedom of many African refugees has been via Sudan to Egypt and then to Israel. Great numbers of Sudanese, Ethiopian and Eritrean refugees fall in the hands of smugglers who then allegedly trade with them and their organs. In Egypt, the government of Hosni Mubarak applied shoot-to-kill policy against refugees who attempted to escape desperate African refugee conditions in the country. Many were killed while attempting to cross Egyptian check-posts to the Sinai.³³

Despite loud international criticisms, Egypt did not abide by international refugee laws, and deported many refugees. Few Eritrean refugees who requested asylum via the Ethiopian Embassy in Cairo were granted deportation to Ethiopia instead of Eritrea.³⁴ These refugees claim that they were few lucky ones among the many refugees who were deported to Eritrea and their whereabouts are not presently known. Violating international refugee laws, and despite expressed concerns of humanitarian organizations such as Amnesty International, Egypt and Libya repeatedly deported Eritrean refugees to their country of origin. Although the exact numbers are unknown, Egypt also deported many Ethiopian and Southern Sudanese refugees. Many hundreds were also living in desperate conditions in Egyptian prisons. Why Egypt was reacting in such a manner is not clear but, based on refugee respondents, Egypt's refugee policy towards Horn of African refugees was poorly guided. Some Eritrean

³² Interview with Weini Debesay (interview, June 13, 2013).

³³ Example, Egypt is claimed to have killed about 80 innocent African refugees at the border areas; See Human Rights Concern Eritrea, *They Shoot Migrants, Don't They?* Posted at: <http://hrc-eritrea.org/?p=135> (accessed on May 22, 2013). See also, Rachel Humphris, *New Issues in Refugee Research: Refugees and the Rashaida: Human Smuggling and Trafficking from Eritrea to Sudan and Egypt*, (UNHCR, Research Paper No. 247; UNHCR, Policy Development and Evaluation Service), Geneva, Switzerland, 2012. This report is also posted at: http://www.humansecuritygateway.com/documents/UNHCR_RefugeesandtheRashaida.pdf (accessed on May 30, 2013).

³⁴ The accounts of Eritrean refugees who were deported from Egypt to Ethiopia was published in a documentary by Surafiel Woldai under the title: *The State of Eritrea: A Message for All*, 2011. This documentary has widely been distributed across North America. It, not only accounts voices of deportees from Egypt, but also Eritrean refugee circumstances in Ethiopia.

respondents claimed that Egypt had cordial relations with the Eritrean regime, and based on this, it freely deported Eritreans back to the country.

4.5.3 Hunting for captive refugees in Sudan

Traffickers continue to hunt for refugee men, women and children from Sudanese refugee camps. Kidnapping refugees from farm fields, from grazing lands, refugee camps and other working fields has been a growing practice by members of the Rashaida tribe who consider this inhumane practice as a means of lucrative business. In some instances, they raided the Shegerab camp in daylight in search of captives.³⁵ The Rashaida (also known in Egypt and Sudan as Bedouins) are Arabic-speaking groups who are distributed in Eritrea, Sudan, Egypt as well as in small pockets in Libya. Equipped with machine guns, pick-ups and other tools, members of these tribes have been involved heavily in trading with human beings for many years. Therefore, great numbers of victims of refugees in Sinai were brought by force – by traffickers such as the Rashaidas.³⁶ In such raids, thousands of victims were sold by the Sudanese Rashaida to the Bedouins in the Sinai. Moreover, members of the Rashaida tribe were also among the most brutal outlaws during the crisis within Sudan.

These Bedouins are not only demanding ransom from relatives of the victims in the diaspora and at home for their release, they also extract human organs in the desert (cf. below). Hence, trafficking of African refugees from Sudan and other countries of the Horn of Africa is part of the highly complex and organized network of crimes. According to respondents, the Rashaida kidnapers usually stay in border areas where they kidnap fleeing refugees from Eritrea, South Sudan or Ethiopia. They kidnap any of such refugees before they arrive at UNHCR-supervised camps. The captives are then forced to travel to Sinai where they remain under horrendous circumstances until their family members and relatives pay big ransom money or their organs are harvested and killed. Testimonies of survivors also indicate that many

³⁵ IRIN, Humanitarian News and Analysis, <http://www.irinnews.org/Report/93118/ERITREA-SUDAN-Refugees-battling-for-a-better-life> (accessed on May 12, 2013); see also Rachel Humphris, *New Issues in Refugee Research*, pp. 7-14.

³⁶ CNN Freedom Project *Death in the Desert: A CNN Freedom Project Documentary* <http://thecnnfreedomproject.blogs.cnn.com/category/death-in-the-desert/> (accessed on May 30, 2013).

refugees remain in the Sinai for years under conditions which can be described as “barbarous slavery”.³⁷

4.5.4. Road to the Sinai

The Sinai Desert is considered to be one of the holy places in the world – the Prophet Abraham is believed to have crossed it, then the Prophet Moses spent his life in it. Many holy men from North and West Africa crossed the desert as pilgrims to Mecca, and so on. It has now become a living hell on earth for African refugees. According to testimonies, Egypt and Israel failed to maintain the holiness of this territory and it is now populated by members of the Bedouins, some of whom have championed the committing of crimes against humanity. Infested by outlaws from some Egyptian Bedouin tribes, the Sinai Desert has been hosting thousands of shackled and inhumanely abused African refugees. In general, the circumstances of the smuggling of African refugees from East Africa to Libya and Sinai are extremely complex and varied. Therefore, it is a very difficult subject of study, and cannot be fully explored in a single essay such as this. However, the following may serve as a general overview of Horn of African refugee situation in the Sinai. These refugees arrived in the Sinai in a variety of ways, including the following:

1. Desperate to escape maltreatment and appalling living conditions in Sudan and Egypt, many of them were smuggled to the Sinai where they languish in the hands of the criminal gangs. When they depart from Sudan or Egypt, they had hoped for a better future in Israel or any other country in the region. Before arriving at the borders of Israel and Egypt, many were kidnapped by the Bedouins.
2. As this practice has intensified, especially since 2007, this path has been almost abandoned by many African refugees who did not want to risk falling into the hands of the outlaws. In response, the outlaws have extended their reach of hunting for refugee victims to as far as the Sudanese refugee camps such as Shegerab, the border territories with Eritrea, and parts of Southern Sudan.³⁸

³⁷ Interviews with Alem Ghide, Amanuel Haile and Zeweldi Araya (first name changed on respondents' request).

³⁸ European Parliament 2012. Resolution on human trafficking in Sinai, in particular the case of Solomon W (2012/2569 RSP), <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/oeil/popups/summary.do?id=1198074&t=e&l=en> (accessed on

3. Trading with refugees and their body organs has become the most lucrative business for some Bedouin tribes in the Sinai. This business has continued to grow since 2008, and involves hundreds of other outlaws in the Sudan, Egypt and Israel – human organ traffickers from the Rashaida tribe.³⁹

4.6. *Life in the Sinai: “modern slavery” or beyond?*

In his speech at the Clinton Initiative, in September 2012, US President Barack Obama denounced the whole practice of human trafficking as ‘evil and barbaric...modern day slavery’.⁴⁰ President Obama’s labelling of this practice as “evil and barbaric” is very sound although what actually has been taking place in the Sinai is beyond “modern day slavery”. The barbarism that has been inflicted upon African refugees by Bedouin tribes in the Sinai, based on narratives of respondents, is far beyond the concept of “slavery” which Africa knows from its experience during the worst phases of trans-Atlantic slave trade, for instance. As we shall see below, where African slaves were treated like cattle during the trans-Atlantic slave trade, modern-day refugees in the Sinai are treated far worse by their Bedouin captors. This is demonstrated in the degree of maltreatments applied by the perpetrators on the victims (cf. below). The following is one of the common stories of refugees who were kidnapped and abused by criminal gangs in Sudan and the Sinai:

May 30, 2013). A number of my respondents claim that they lived in Sudanese refugee camps where kidnapping and murder by the Rashaida tribes was a common practice. They state that the kidnappers often came with trucks on which they grabbed and took away vulnerable victims in Eastern Sudan. Three of my respondents further claim that the kidnappers seemed to work hand in hand with some Sudanese authorities such as the “Security” and police. They claim that armed Sudanese security and the police did not try to prevent refugees when the criminal gangs raided their camps or when refugees were grabbed and taken from farming fields.

³⁹ Example, assumptions have it that some people in the United States who sold illegal kidney got it from these victimized refugees. In one incident, as part of this rumor, a rabbi was caught in New Jersey, USA when he attempted to import a number of kidneys. Although the actual report on this does not clearly indicate where the kidneys actually came from, it has been widely assumed by Eritrean, Ethiopian, Sudanese and Somali members of the diaspora I talked to about this news that these kidneys were African kidneys, and specifically from Horn of African refugees robbed of their organs and brutally massacred in the Sinai. For these news, see Fox News, Rabbi caught in New Jersey Corruption Sting Called Himself Kidney ‘Matmatcher’, posted at: <http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,534838,00.html> (accessed on July 27, 2009, and revisited on May 10, 2013); and The Wall Street Journal, Jersey Mayors Stung in Graft Probe: <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB124835404608875685.html> (accessed on May 2010 and May 29, 2013).

⁴⁰ Also posted at CNN Freedom Project: <http://thecnnfreedomproject.blogs.cnn.com/2012/09/25/obama-every-nation-can-tackle-slavery/> (accessed on May 21, 2013).

I ran away from Eritrea seven months ago to avoid the army service. Intended to find refuge in Sudan, but when I arrived in Sudan, crossing the border by foot, with several other Eritreans, some Bedouins arrived with a vehicle and kidnapped us. Some of us succeeded in running away but they managed to kidnap me along with others. They locked us up in a small house in Kassala, beating us daily with a stick. They threatened me "if you will not pay us \$35,000, you will be our woman." I gave them phone numbers of my family members but they told the kidnappers that they don't have a possibility to raise such amount of money. I was locked there in a dark room for four months. I discovered that I got pregnant. We received very little food and I was beaten constantly. I had a miscarriage. It took my family long months to raise the money and I was taken with others to Sinai. There they requested \$3,400 more. It took three more months for my family to raise the additional sum. We were released near the border of Israel with a group of about 30 Eritreans. The Egyptian soldiers shot at us on the way. Some of us got frightened and returned back to the Egyptian side. We arrived to the giant new fence on the Israeli border and we were not able to cross it. We waited there in the sun for long days with no food and water. There were Israeli soldiers on the other side who kept on telling us to go back. There were several children with us who could not suffer it any longer and attempted to go back. The Egyptian soldiers shouted to the children "you cannot come back unless you bring us the women in your group." We refused to go back, knowing why they want us back ...⁴¹

4.6.1. Methods of barbarism in the Sinai

As mentioned above, shackled refugees are greeted in the Sinai with despicable horrors.⁴² For whatever reasons, according to respondents, Eritrean refugees are by far the most victimized refugees in the Sinai. Based on the accounts of victims, also published widely in the international media, the Bedouins treat refugee captives in a condition that is difficult to describe. The following are some of the common practices as expressed by many of the victims who were interviewed by the international media.

⁴¹ Testimony of G., a 21 year old Eritrean woman, given to the *Hotline for Migrant Workers Activists*, September 2012, adopted from Sigal Rozen, *Tortured in Sinai, Jailed in Israel: Detention of Slavery and Torture Survivors under the Anti-Infiltration Law*, Sept. 2012. This article is also available online at: <http://www.hotline.org.il/english/pdf/TorturedInSinaiJailedInIsraelENG.pdf> (accessed on May 1, 2013).

⁴² See also Meron Estefanos, *Bedouin Rashaida: The Human Traffickers in North-East Africa*, published at: <http://asmarino.com/articles/958-eritrea-bedouin-rashaida-the-human-traffickers-in-north-east-africa> (accessed on May 31, 2013). See also Rachel Humphris, *New Issues in Refugee Research: Refugees and the Rashaida: Human Smuggling and Trafficking from Eritrea to Sudan and Egypt*, (UNHCR, Research Paper No. 247; UNHCR, Policy Development and Evaluation Service), Geneva, Switzerland, 2012, pp. 14-16. This report is also posted at: http://www.humansecuritygateway.com/documents/UNHCR_RefugeesandtheRashaida.pdf (accessed on May 30, 2013).



An African refugee held hostage by an armed gang in the Sinai

Photo source: The Jewish Daily Forward.com⁴³

4.6.2. Ransom and torture: Case of Eritrean refugees

Once refugees arrive in the caves of horror in Sinai, they are normally asked to produce tens of thousands of dollars from their relatives and friends elsewhere. To that end, they are often physically abused. As noted by Woldemariam “...it is the Bedouin who begin negotiating with the family of hostages for their release and with the promise of helping them cross into Israel clandestinely”.⁴⁴ Victims are asked to call their relatives wherever they are, and ask them to send money to the traffickers in a bid of their release. According to many respondents from the detentions of Sinai, the ransom of money ranged between 30,000 to 50,000 US

⁴³ The Jewish Daily Forward, Focus on Eritrean Refugees in Sinai and Israel at Advocacy Event in Los Angeles Tales of Horror for Africans Trying To Reach Israel: <http://forward.com/articles/171403/focus-on-eritrean-refugees-in-sinai-and-israel-at/#ixzz2V3Lk8oB5> (accessed on May 3, 2013).

⁴⁴ Yebio Woldemariam, The Eritrean Refugees and Human Trafficking, posted at Asmarino Independent: <http://asmarino.com/articles/1674-the-eritrean-refugees-and-human-trafficking> (accessed on May 13, 2013). As clearly be seen in the photo, the perpetrators are armed with modern automatic guns.

dollars.⁴⁵ Based on results of informal interviews I conducted with over 35 members of the Eritrean diaspora in North America, their relatives who fell victims of the Bedouins called them one or more times while they were being brutally tortured or sexually abused by the criminal gangs, and were asked to send money if they wanted their relatives' lives saved. The term commonly used by the traffickers in the Sinai when they call relatives of victims was "hawul", respondents often explained. Apparently, hawul is an Arabic term meaning, "you send money" (imperative form). Methods of torture, again as also reported in the world media, are horrendous. Among other things, victims were exposed to electric shocks, burning of their skins with things such as burning plastics, amputation of body organs such as limbs and sexual organs, and more.⁴⁶ According to Sigal Rozen, 91% of Eritrean refugees who arrived in Israel were handled by multiple groups of smugglers and 37% of them witnessed injury or death of victims while held in the Sinai.⁴⁷ The following extract of an interview was published in Spiegel Online International. The extract is representative of many of the stories of torture also gathered by myself and other media outlets. Mhretab, 27, Eritrean refugee to Israel narrates:

We had barely anything to eat or drink. And we weren't allowed to sleep. If we did, they burned us. They scorched the skin on our arms or backs with burning plastic, or they burned us directly with lighters. They hung us from our feet and hit us. If we cried, they called our families and we had to beg them over the phone to pay for us.⁴⁸

The Bedouin smugglers are involved in diverse criminal activities such as producing intensive marijuana designed for marketing in the western countries. Although such plantations may not be as vast as in tropical areas, thanks to slave work of refugees, these plantations have

⁴⁵ As narrated to me from respondents; and as also broadcasted and published by Assenna.com – Eritrean media based in the UK. Assenna.com conducted many telephone interviews, who were held in Sinai by contacting them in the Sinai. Many of these interviews were broadcasted in this media outlet.

⁴⁶ Sigal Rozen, Tortured in Sinai, Jailed in Israel: Detention of Slavery and Torture Survivors under the Anti-Infiltration Law, Sept. 2012. This article is also available online at: <http://www.hotline.org.il/english/pdf/TorturedInSinaiJailedInIsraelENG.pdf> (accessed on May 1, 2013). See also CNN's freedom project.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 9.

⁴⁸ Directly quoted from Nicola Abé, "Imprisoned, Tortured and Killed: Human Trafficking Thrives on the Sinai Peninsula" in: *Spiegel Online International* (March 29, 2013). This article is posted at: <http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/human-trafficking-thrives-on-sinai-peninsula-a-891585.html> (accessed on May 3, 2013).

proved to be productive, according to respondents. Many refugees are forced to work in illegal plantations, such as marijuana plantations located within the Sinai as slaves.⁴⁹

The following are some photos of survivors of despicable conditions in the Sinai



Eritrean refugee victims of abuses in the Sinai, displaying burnt parts of their bodies

Source: Storify.com



Evidences of massive torture – skin burning
Source: BBC.co.uk



Abused refugees in the Sinai

Source: Spiegel Online International (March 29, 2013)



Physically abused refugee in a critical condition

Source: everyone.com

⁴⁹ CNN Freedom Project.

4.6.3. *Intensive gang rape*

According to stories of refugees, the ordeal of being a hostage under the Bedouins is much worse for women than men. These women victims do not only suffer from the inhuman tortures, but also intensive rapes by the traffickers. Many become pregnant, many miscarry and many die in the process. Despite the fact that culturally, women from the Horn of Africa restrain from speaking about sexual abuses they may encounter, many women from the region are now expressing their sorrow in various media outlets. One example is an Eritrean woman, Tigisti Tekle who was repeatedly raped and then got pregnant. She narrates her bitter story to the UNHCR:

They are cruel people... They are criminal people and they don't have the human sense like us. I screamed that I am a virgin but they just don't care at all about you... I would suffer all my life... I would have a son or a daughter without a father. That's why I decided not to have the baby.⁵⁰

During this interview on CNN, Tigisti demonstrated her bitterness with flowing tears that constantly shed from her eyes down to her chin through the interview. One could easily see the trauma she still suffers in her facial expressions. An Ethiopian refugee also claimed that she was raped in front of her husband by several people, during which her husband died of a heart attack. She feels a sense of guilt for the death of her husband, and says that she lives in a state of trauma.⁵¹ Another refugee woman who escaped to Israel states: "Every night, they took me separately, and they did whatever they wanted to my body".⁵² According to reports, women who fall in the hands of Bedouin traffickers often get raped by a dozen of men.⁵³ In the same manner as Tigisti suffered, many women get pregnant during rapes. Many of these

⁵⁰ UNHCR Refugees Daily, *Women Raped by Sinai Traffickers find Help* (24 September 2012), posted at: <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/tehis/vtx/refdaily?pass=463ef21123&id=505ffa155>.

⁵¹ Narrated to me by another victim woman.

⁵² Fred Pleitgen and Mohamed Fadel Fahmy, CNN Freedom Project, *Death in the Desert: Tribesmen Exploit Battle to Reach Israel* (November 3, 2011).

Report posted at: <http://www.cnn.com/2011/11/02/world/meast/egypt-refugees> (accessed on May 31, 2013). Testimonies of such horrors are also published by the Hotline for Migrant Workers (H.N. Bialik), *The Dead of the Wilderness: Testimonies from Sinai Desert*. Report posted at:

http://www.hotline.org.il/english/pdf/Testimonies_from_sinay_122010.pdf (accessed on June 2, 2013). See also multiple interviews by online and aired radio assenna.com in its program called, *Voices of Torture*: <http://assenna.com/voice-of-assenna-voices-of-torture-from-sinai-wed-may-1st-2013/> (accessed on May 3, 2013). Among the people interviewed by assenna.com include children.

⁵³ Example, see Meron Estefanos, *Bedouin Rashaida: The Human Traffickers in North-East Africa*, published at: <http://asmarino.com/articles/958-eritrea-bedouin-rashaida-the-human-traffickers-in-north-east-africa> (accessed on May 31, 2013). Telephone interview with survivor of Sinai crimes, Helen Anday (Tel Aviv, July 14, 2011).

victims miscarry during brutal treatments in the hands of the Bedouins, while many impregnated women also die during maltreatments in the Sinai.

Although some men complain of sexual abuses in the hands of the Bedouins as well, none of my interviews was ready to provide details of this claim. Most of my respondents somehow felt not comfortable talking about sexual abuses, and quite often, they became emotional and resistant whenever I asked such questions related to sexual abuses against men. However, one interview conducted by the Assenna Foundation and broadcasted live on an online radio demonstrates that, in fact, some refugees were victimized by “Sodomization”,⁵⁴ adding that he saw “the actual hell in Sinai.”⁵⁵ Expressing his painful experiences of sexual abuses by these Bedouins, the interviewee states that he and his co-victims were considered as animals by their captors, and that they were raped and forced into sexual intercourse with the other victims. This interviewee states that another woman refugee who went through despicable horrors of brutality died few days before he conducted the interview with the Assenna.com.⁵⁶ Indeed, the practice of sexual abuse by Bedouin traffickers in the Sinai, based on accounts of refugees, is generally extraordinarily dreadful.

4.6.4. Organ harvesting and murder⁵⁷

The worst stage of abuse of refugees in the Sinai is related to human organ harvesting and ruthless murders of thousands of refugees. According to accounts presents by the CNN, in 2011 alone, the known deaths of Eritrean refugees alone as a result of organ harvesting and

⁵⁴ Sodomization in this context means forced sexual abuses of criminal men against victim men or forced sexual abuses among victimized refugees.

⁵⁵ Assenna.com, Voices of Torture, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UPSWUfdkj1A> (posted also on YouTube, accessed on May 3, 2013). The interview was conducted while the victim was still in the hands of the Bedouins. He spoke in Tigrinya language which the Bedouins do not understand. He had this chance of sending his voice through Assenna.com, because the Bedouins thought that his call was all about the “hawul” business. The narratives of these refugees are heart-breaking. According to him, he was originally kidnapped by the Rashaidas from Sudan where he attempted to escape, but then got wounded by a bullet during that attempt. He was caught alive and was then sold to the Sinai Bedouins.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ It shall be noted that forced organ harvesting is an inhuman act. It is obvious that victims of such an act normally do not survive in the Sinai. Hence, evidences related to this practice are based on fragmented sources as displayed in the international media by agencies of human rights and individuals who collected remains of people whose organs were harvested and left to die in the desert. Therefore, I never met any living victim who survived such a practice throughout the study.

murder were estimated at 4000 people.⁵⁸ The horrors of organ harvesting and murder of refugees in the Sinai are described by Hamdi Al-Azazy from the Egyptian New Generation for Human Rights:

It is more than slavery. It's...it's terrible, you can't...you can't accept officially any person about the stories here. Nobody can accept your talking. Because they'll answer you are now joke. Is it not true? Somebody do that in this time in this world?⁵⁹

Al-Azazy is one of the very few Egyptian human rights activists who had the courage to expose the realities of African refugees in the Sinai. Based on his organization's initiative, he managed to find the dead bodies of over 400 African refugees in the Sinai, and distributed the images of the territory's deathly horrors.⁶⁰ As displayed in the horrendous video pictures of the Egyptian New Generation for Human Rights, hundreds of victims of human organ harvesting were left to decay in the desert. About 400 of the unidentified refugees were formally buried in the desert by activists who found the practice equally horrendous. Based on the findings of the Egyptian New Generation for Human Rights, many of the dead bodies left in the Sinai desert had been stripped of many organs: Kidneys, eyeballs, livers, and other valuable tissues. Some of the horrendous pictures displayed in the world media are shown below.

⁵⁸ Estimates given by Fred Pleitgen and Mohamed Fadel Fahmy, CNN Freedom Project (Video), Death in the Desert: Tribesmen Exploit Battle to Reach Israel (November 3, 2011). Report posted at: <http://www.cnn.com/2011/11/02/world/meast/egypt-refugees> (accessed on May 31, 2013). According to this report such plantations were displayed on the video where many South Sudanese refugees are also held as slaves along with Eritreans in these production centers. However, little is known about their living conditions as slaves in the actual plantations. Although I attempted to find and interview anyone who spent time as a slave in such plantations, there was none of all my interviewees who claimed working in a marijuana plantation as a slave. Estimates by CNN Freedom Project, Fred Pleitgen and Mohamed Fadel Fahmy, CNN Freedom Project, Death in the Desert: Tribesmen Exploit Battle to Reach Israel (November 3, 2011). Report posted at: <http://www.cnn.com/2011/11/02/world/meast/egypt-refugees> (accessed on May 31, 2013).

⁵⁹ Extracted from Ibid.

⁶⁰ The horrible images of organ theft and deaths were displayed in the world media in the Arabic website of Al-Azazy's organization. For the original versions of reports in Arabic, see: http://www.youm7.com/News.asp?NewsID=523921&SecID=12&fb_source=message#.Tq8rnE6qnwN.facebook. Al-Azazy, who proved a genuine human rights activist and a real hope for restoring justice and morality in the Sinai and the mainstream of Egypt, lives in destitute condition of fear. In one of his interviews, he stated: "I feel that because of my work against the traffickers and my interviews given to the press, I will soon be killed" (see <http://www.africa-news.eu/immigration-news/world/4258-hamdy-al-azazy-egyptian-rights-activist-fears-for-his-life.html>). See also, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LRXy4TfRY5k> (a video displayed on YouTube by activists). One of the main cemeteries for murdered Horn of African refugees was founded and administered by Al-Azazy's group who claim to have buried people in mass graves located at a port-city of El-Arish. Some testimonies are published in the following video as was also widely posted in YouTube: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LRXy4TfRY5k> (accessed on May 2, 2013).

Human organ harvesting is not a simple business. Laymen lacking medical training could not conduct the harvesting of organs. Therefore, highly trained professional doctors are part of this international criminal business. According to reports, these doctors who sell human organs in the Middle East, Europe and North America roam around the desert in search of victims who could produce quality kidneys. According to reports, a single kidney can sell for over 100,000 US dollars, the buyers believed to be desperate patients lying in a hospital elsewhere in the world.⁶¹ According to medical sources, human organ harvesting does only take place while the donor or victim is alive. Based on reports of refugees who witnessed organ harvesting in the Sinai, human bodies were slaughtered while the victims were alive. According to testimonies, the actors wore no special cloths and bore no indication that they were medical doctors; but their cars carried not only refrigerators but also medical equipment. According witnesses, once body organs were extracted, the refugees were simply thrown away in places resembling junkyards – while still alive. It is in this pile of discards that they succumb to the atrocities inflicted on them. According to medical doctor, with whom I had a chat about such a practice, it is possible those victims could live for up to eight hours after vital organ harvesting, and that the extracted organs could survive in normal cooled conditions also for about the same number of hours.⁶²

⁶¹ Details of such practices are displayed by Hamdi al-Azizy and other activists, and video evidences are posted on different websites, such as at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LRXy4TfRY5k>, by CNN Freedom Project, (accessed on May 07, 2013). In this video, it is been exposed that some of the active perpetrators belong to the Al-Naxalwa tribe of the Bedouins. Al Azazy alone claims to have buried over 1000 dead bodies.

⁶² Intewiwed with Dr. Jack Heidenreich (Zurich, June 23, 2010).



Eritrean refugee who lost organs for the traffickers
Source: <http://www.petitionbuzz.com/petitions/sinai>



Shackled Eritrean whose organs harvested and left to die in the desert of Bedouins, and excavated on plain field of the Sinai

Source: Assenna.com



Bodies of African refugees after organ harvesting in the Sinai
Source: <http://cofs.org/home/sinai/>



Collected bodies of African refugees during burial after organ harvesting

Source: CNN.com

4.6.5. Survivors of horror in Israel

The situation of Eritrean refugees in Israel is not so different. The Israeli government continually threatens Eritrean and other African refugees of deportation. While many Sudanese refugees have been deported, Eritrean refugees in Israel are living in uncertain conditions. Contrary to state obligations emanating from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the UN Refugee Convention (especial reference to refoulement; cf. above), many Eritrean refugees in the country do not have any legal documents. Some have permission papers for which they have to reapply for renewal every month, with a maximum of three months, as the refugees tell. According to respondents, those who intended to migrate to Canada and other countries for resettlement had been denied permission on claims that Israel is a democratic nation and that no “non-protected” refugees may leave the country. On the basis of such diplomatic stands, the Canadian Embassy in Israel declined a great number of applications for permanent application.⁶³ Israel has vowed in recent months that it would put “infiltrator” African refugees in reserve camps – camps that would provide no freedom to refugees.

4.7. Conclusion

The Horn of Africa is one of the most politically troubled regions of the world. Despite its strategic location in the international maritime commerce, this region has often fallen victim to intervention, and domestic violence. This, in addition to internal political crises that occurred during the post-colonial period, left the region in a state of turmoil. Somalia, which initially fell prey to blocks of the Cold War, was mired in brutal civil strife since the 1990s. Ethiopia, as part of the Cold War, established amicable relations with the Soviet Union. In a struggle to combat US interests in the region, the Soviets pumped massive military support to the communist Ethiopian regime. As a result, the conflict in the north and east of the country resulted in a massive social disorder – death and displacement of hundreds of thousands of

⁶³ See also reports of discrimination against African refugees in Israel: David Sheen, *A Year in Review: Anti African Racism and Asylum Seekers in Israel*: <http://972mag.com/a-year-in-review-anti-african-racism-and-asylum-seekers-in-israel/72381/> (accessed on May 31, 2013). This report includes video reports with detailed of conditions of African refugees in Israel.

peoples of the Horn. The Cold War's impact was also deeply felt in the Sudan where civil war characterized the main political environment of the region. Eritrea, which combatted and successfully defeated the Dergue communist regime in Ethiopia, became independent formally in 1993. However, the regime established immediately after independence became increasingly to grow dictatorial in a growing degree of brutality through the second-half of the 1990s. As a result, massive numbers of peoples of the Horn were displaced from the region. Since 2006, many of these refugee populations started to fall pray of organized criminal gangs – the Rashaida and Bedouin tribes. The gangs have demonstrated inhuman practices that are difficult to compare with any part of human history. Many of these African refugees have become captives of traffickers, and become victims of various physical abuses and human organ harvesting. A variety of abusive practices were demonstrated in Libya, mainland Egypt and the Egyptian Sinai Desert. The Horrors of victimization include organ harvesting, rape, and forced labour.

4.8. Recommendations

I would like to conclude by quoting one of the renowned human rights lawyers in Canada, David Matas of Winnipeg, Manitoba. Mr. Matas stated:

...When crimes against humanity are committed, we are all victims. We must not be silent in the face of our own victimization, when part of our human family suffers from grave abuses.⁶⁴

As described above, thousands of African refugees are continuously victimized by human trafficking perpetrated by organized criminal gangs in the Sinai Desert. Although the intensity of the human trafficking challenge in the Sinai has not yet been experienced in most other parts of the world, the international community has not taken immediate actions against the perpetrators in the region. If the trend continues unabated, the practice could easily spread elsewhere. Symptoms to this effect were already made visible in at least one airport of the US

⁶⁴ September 18, 2011, a human rights event hosted by the University of Winnipeg. Report on the event can be retrieved from: <http://www.asmarino.com/news/1205-group-focuses-attention-on-terrible-injustices-being-perpetrated-in-eritrea-> (accessed on May 02, 2012).

where an Israeli was caught with a number of smuggled kidneys ready for transplant.⁶⁵ Therefore, the following are some critical recommendations to combat the illicit practice of human trafficking. The International community is urged:

1. To give urgent attention to the horrific and inhuman atrocities of African refugees in Sudan, Libya and Egypt (especially the Sinai) and take the necessary steps to eliminating it in order to help put an end to the suffering of innocent refugees.
2. To put pressure on the Government of Sudan to help stop the heinous atrocities that include abduction, extortion, extreme physical torture, enslavement, rape, organ harvesting and trading that is happening under its jurisdiction in the country; and to put pressure on the Government of Sudan to stop the corrupt elements of its police/military and boarder guard personnel who are arresting refugees from the streets of Kassala, Khartoum, and other towns and selling them to the Bedouins, as well as in the refugee camps in Darfur and Eastern Sudan.
3. To protect Eritrean refugees in the Shegerab camp in Sudan from kidnappers and their aides.
4. To urge the Egyptian Government to respect international human rights obligations by protecting African and releasing detained refugees. Moreover; to put pressure on the Government of Egypt to act to stop the heinous atrocities that include abduction, extortion, extreme physical torture, enslavement, rape, organ harvesting and trading that is happening under its jurisdiction in Sinai, and to demand that the Egyptian Government intervene immediately and free the refugees that are being held captive in torture camps of Sinai.
5. To take diplomatic initiatives, and remind Egypt to take urgent action to tackle organized crime by rescuing these hostages, bringing their captors to justice, and permanently closing these torture camps. Also, in cooperation with relevant UN bodies, to initiate an inquiry into the gross human rights violations, perpetrated against the helpless Eritrean and other refugees in Egyptian Sinai.
6. Moreover, the international community and the UNHCR are also urged to take note of

⁶⁵ See Fox News, “Rabbi Caught in New Jersey Corruption Sting Called Himself Kidney “Matchmaker”, Headline news broadcasted on July 25, 2009. For details, visit: <http://www.foxnews.com/story/2009/07/25/rabbi-caught-in-new-jersey-corruption-sting-called-himself-kidney-matchmaker/> (accessed on July 28, 2013).

the urgency of the African refugee situation in Israel.

To this end, the international community is called upon:

- To urge the State of Israel to reconsider its proposal to deport African, especially Eritrean refugees given that they will certainly face imminent danger to their lives.
- To save innocent lives from certain deaths by resettling the victims of Sinai to Canada, USA, Australia or any other country. The international community is also urged to initiate a dialogue with Israel and the UNHCR to find the lasting solution for these vulnerable Eritrean refugees, and allow resettlement of Eritrean refugees elsewhere.⁶⁶

⁶⁶ Many of these recommendations and appeals to the Government of Canada were also made by Hidmona Human Rights Organization in Manitoba, on December 10, 2012 (Worldwide Human Rights Day).

CHAPTER FIVE

SELF-DETERMINATION AND INTERDEPENDENCE IN SUDAN AND THE HORN OF AFRICA

Giorgio Musso

Abstract

Political instability in the Horn of Africa region is often attributed to self-determination struggles threatening to alter the established post-colonial boundaries. This article suggests that self-determination should be seen as more than simply a synonym of secession. Territorial separation may be unavoidable when conflicts reach a point of no return, but it is just a step towards the fulfilment of popular aspirations for good governance and development, not an end in itself. Taking Sudan as a case study, the article shows how secession is more about managing interdependencies than achieving mutual isolation. Extending our outlook to the regional level, we contend that the management of interdependence is the key to defuse the current tension between fragmentation and unity in the Horn of Africa. Interdependencies can cause conflicts at the local and national level when they produce highly asymmetric power relations and when they are managed outside a regulated framework. Conversely, if entrusted to proper institutional mechanisms, interdependencies can help to overcome the centre-periphery imbalances that have characterized state-formation in the Horn of Africa and foster regional integration.

***Key terms:** self-determination, Horn of Africa, post-colonial, nationalism, secession*

5.1. Introduction

The present chapter revolves around two seemingly unrelated – if not opposed – concepts, self-determination and interdependence. Self-determination is as difficult to define objectively as it is attractive to claim subjectively. In the context of this article, it is applied to peoples – leaving aside individual self-determination – fighting for freedom and equal rights under the yoke of domination by a central state authority which is perceived as abusive and oppressive. In its most radical form the struggle for self-determination takes the form of a claim for secession, implying the complete exercise of internal and external sovereignty by a newly constituted political authority on an independent territory.

Interdependence is another wide-ranging term, and is used here in the meaning developed by international relations theorists Joseph Nye and Robert Keohane since the second half of the 1970s. The two American scholars moved from an exclusively economic idea of interdependence and redefined it as a multi-faceted concept encompassing geopolitical, cultural and social factors.¹

The first two paragraphs of this article discuss the definition of both terms, while the rest of the paper is devoted to analyse the interaction between self-determination and interdependence in the context of the “greater” Horn of Africa,² with a special focus on Sudan.

In the last two decades, the Horn of Africa has witnessed a long chain of political crises connected with the exercise of self-determination: Eritrea’s independence from Ethiopia, the collapse of the Somali state and lastly the secession of South Sudan. This region has emerged as the epicentre and the emblem of the unresolved issues pertaining to statehood, nation-building and sovereignty in Africa.

At the same time, the Horn of Africa is characterized by a number of strong interdependencies at different levels – economic, geopolitical, security – which bind the countries and their people in a regional system. Self-determination and interdependence are therefore key elements of a complex geopolitical reality on the ground.

In this regard, this article argues two theses. The first is that the common political debate about self-determination has been marred by a reductionist approach, leading to equivalence between self-determination and secession. This misrepresentation is supported both by secessionist groups and the governments condemning them, but risks to undermine the genuine aspiration to political, social and economic development by the concerned peoples. Therefore, self-determination is defined here in its broader and multi-faceted meaning, which includes secession as well but reassesses the meaning of self-determination in the face of the

¹ Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye, *Power and Interdependence*, 4th ed. (Boston: Longman, 2012).

² I include in the “greater” Horn of Africa the states adhering to the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD), a regional economic community (REC) formed in 1986 by Ethiopia, Eritrea, Djibouti, Somalia, Sudan, Kenya and Uganda. Eritrea suspended its participation in 2007 in protest against the Ethiopian armed intervention in Somalia.

local and supra-national processes which are changing the nature and the role of the nation-state worldwide.

The second thesis is that dynamics of interdependence are central to the debate about self-determination. Interdependence reveals the relative and relational nature of self-determination in a world where economic and social relations are eroding the absoluteness of political sovereignty.

The case of Sudan and South Sudan shows how a proper management of interdependence is needed in order to complement the exercise of the right to self-determination and guarantee the attainment of its ultimate aims. In a wider perspective, this article suggests that a focus on the multiple interdependencies present in the Horn of Africa may offer a way out of the vicious circle between authoritarian governance and territorial fragmentation which is currently hindering the democratic political development of the region.

5.2. Self-determination: The need for reconsideration

The debate around the right to self-determination ran as a thread through the tumultuous events of the last century. The first wave of self-determination claims came with the decline of the Austro-Hungarian, Ottoman and Russian empires and their subsequent fall in the course of the First World War. The second was spurred by the decolonization of the third World and was often violent in its methods, facing colonial powers that were unwilling to relinquish control of their overseas possessions. The third wave followed the fall of the Soviet Union and the Eastern bloc. Generally speaking, Eastern European and Central Asian countries achieved self-determination peacefully, but the Balkan wars of the 1990s and the widespread unrest in the Caucasus witnessed the persistent sensitivity of self-determination.

Whenever self-determination has been exercised in the cadre of the dissolution of some form of multi-national political entity, it has been widely accepted by the international community as a legitimate claim. Conversely, it has been regarded with suspicion when invoked by a single people or a region within a State. The issue has been particularly sensitive in Africa,

where few states correspond to a homogeneous “nation” and most have inherited problems of administrative and economic over-centralization from colonial regimes.³ The *uti possidetis* principle – meaning the intangibility of recognized colonial boundaries – has been officially recognized by the Organization of African Unity since 1964.⁴ Not surprisingly, claims for self-determination have been one of the primary sources of political strife and armed conflict on the continent.

One of the main reasons which make self-determination such a thorny and somewhat ambiguous issue is its legal vagueness. Self-determination has been enshrined in numerous international acts, such as the United Nations Charter and the Final Act of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe of 1975, but it is notably absent from other important texts, as the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In fact, there is no agreed legal definition of the right to self-determination, both in its subjective – who is entitled to claim this right – and objective – what does the right to self-determination imply and how it is to be exercised – aspects.⁵

Until the 1960s, the prevailing historical conditions made self-determination almost equivalent with the attainment of independence. After decolonization, however, international treaties started to consider the subject in a wider perspective. The Helsinki Final Act (1975) introduced the distinction between *internal* and *external* self-determination, stating that:

By virtue of the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples, all peoples always have the right, in full freedom, to determine, when and as they wish, their internal and external political status, without external interference, and to pursue as they wish their political, economic, social and cultural development.⁶

More than twenty years later a panel of experts gathered by recognized the need to overcome a simplistic view of self-determination as “a rigid choice between all or nothing - between the

³ Francis Mading Deng, *Self-Determination and National Unity: A Challenge for Divided Nations in Africa* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2009).

⁴ Organization of African Unity, “Border Disputes among African States,” AHG/Res. 16(I), July 17–24, 1964, http://www.au.int/en/sites/default/files/ASSEMBLY_EN_17_21_JULY_1964_ASSEMBLY_HEADS_STATE_GOVERNMENT_FIRST_ORDINARY_SESSION.pdf (accessed on October 10, 2012).

⁵ Antonio Cassese, *Self-Determination of Peoples: A Legal Reappraisal* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

⁶ “Final Act of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe,” August 1, 1975, 14 *International Legal Materials* 1292, art. VIII.

forming of an independent state or complete denial of a cultural and political identity,”⁷ and defined internal self-determination as “participatory democracy”:

The right to decide the form of government and the identity of rulers by the whole population of a state and the right of a population group within the state to participate in decision making at the state level. Internal self-determination can also mean the right to exercise cultural, linguistic, religious or (territorial) political autonomy within the boundaries of the existing state.”⁸

The conclusions of the Panel reflected an increasing trend among legal scholars to widen the scope of self-determination and emphasize issues of governance beyond the simple reference to political independence.

The 1993 Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action (VDPA), which gave birth to the United Nations Commissioner on Human Rights, stated that:

All peoples have the right of self-determination. By virtue of that right they freely determine their political status, and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development. [...] this shall not be construed as authorizing or encouraging any action which would dismember or impair, totally or in part, the territorial integrity or political unity of sovereign and independent States *conducting themselves in compliance with the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples and thus possessed of a Government representing the whole people belonging to the territory without distinction of any kind.*⁹

According to the VDPA, therefore, what is central in the attainment of self-determination is the opportunity to pursue economic, social and cultural development. The call to constitute an independent polity is not affirmed as a right in itself but is implicitly admitted as a legitimate claim of last-resort in case the aforementioned rights are persistently denied within an existing State.

It is not a coincidence that such a reassessment of self-determination came in the aftermath of 1989. Having witnessed the many unfulfilled expectations of decolonization in Africa and

⁷ UNESCO, “The Implementation of the Right to Self-Determination as a Contribution to Conflict Prevention,” Report of the International Conference of Experts, November 21-27, 1998 (Barcelona: UNESCO Division of Human Rights, Democracy and Peace/UNESCO Centre of Catalonia, 1999), 4.

⁸ *Ibid*, p. 12.

⁹ “Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action”, June 25, 1993, UN Doc. A/CONF.157/23, 32 *International Legal Materials* 1661 (1993), art. I.2.

Asia, the international community was conscious that the birth of new States from the ashes of the Soviet Union was the starting point, not the end, of long and turbulent self-determination processes.

On the other side, the growing interconnectedness of the post-Cold War world and the increasing influence of supranational entities were blurring the boundaries of sovereignty, challenging the very idea of political and economic independence. Juridical sovereignty was no more matched by an equal degree of empirical sovereignty, particularly in the case of small states. In the era of globalization, self-determination and interdependence were entering into a dialectical relationship.

5.3. Interdependence: A theoretical background

Interdependence has been a central concept of political economy throughout the last century and a half, constituting a key tenet of liberal thought since the time of Adam Smith. The basic argument on interdependence has focused on the beneficial effects of international trade on peace and stability among nations.

The concept regained prominence in international relations theory when the 1973 oil shock showed how the growing economic interconnectedness of the world markets made the global system vulnerable. Small states controlling the extraction of natural resources could pose serious threats to the world superpowers, redefining traditional hierarchies based on military capability.

In an article anticipating his landmark “Power and Interdependence,” – co-authored with Robert Koehane – Joseph Nye introduced the analysis of what he would then define as *complex interdependence*:

Interdependence means a situation of reciprocal effects or mutual dependence. The sources of interdependence are both physical – for example, the spread of ocean pollutants and depletion of the earth’s protective ozone sphere – and social – for example,

the economic, political, and perceptual effects that events in the Middle East and the United States have had upon each other.¹⁰

The *mutual* character of interdependence distinguishes it from a relation of dependence. However, interdependence is often characterized by asymmetry, giving rise to unequal power relations.¹¹ For instance, shared river resources create a condition of mutual dependence between the countries involved, but the incentives to agree to a joint management scheme vary according to the upstream-downstream location of each country, the availability of alternative water resources, perceived “historic” rights and many other factors.

Interdependence always implies costs, which is what gives it a distinctly political value and differentiates it from simple *interconnectedness*. According to Keohane and Nye, the balance between costs and benefits may not always turn out to be positive: interdependence is by no means a synonym for mutual benefit.¹² On the contrary, *sensitivity* and *vulnerability* need to be taken into account when assessing a relation of interdependence: while the first term designates the mutual responsiveness to changes in a given context, the second takes into account the availability of alternatives to adapt to the new situation. Take the case of Sudan and South Sudan. The North has lost 75% of its proven oil reserves after the secession of the South, but still owns the infrastructure needed to refine and ship the crude. This means that the South has to seek the cooperation of its former master in order to enjoy the much-needed revenues coming from black gold. However, Khartoum is much more vulnerable than Juba as the latter can, in the medium term, build its own refineries and realize a new pipeline to export its oil through Kenya – a project which is already under study – while the North has no alternative in case the South decides so. Vulnerability often adds intensity to the asymmetry of interdependence, as the less vulnerable party can use the resources at stake to obtain concessions from the other.¹³

The effects of interdependence on peace and conflict have been at the centre of an intense scholarly and political debate, with liberals contending that interdependence foster peace by

¹⁰ Joseph Nye, “Independence and Interdependence,” *Foreign Policy*, no. 22 (1976): 130–161 (132).

¹¹ Keohane and Nye, *Power*, note 1 above, p. 6.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 7.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

increasing the costs of war and realists emphasizing the asymmetric nature of interdependence and thus its destabilizing potential.¹⁴

Nye avoids giving his theory a normative value on this point, arguing that “interdependence is neither good nor bad, and is just as easily a source of conflict as of cooperation. In some instances, the best policy response is to try to *diminish* rather than to extend interdependence.”¹⁵

Nye’s argument however seem to contradict his characterization of interdependence as a complex phenomenon. While it’s true that the degree of economic interdependence can be managed by way of policies, the same cannot be said for other kinds of bond. This is true in particular for interdependencies created by objective conditions such as borders or the existence of trans-boundary ethnic groups. A landlocked state, for instance, cannot completely overcome the constraints imposed on it by its position on the map. The *rigidity* of interdependence has to be assessed in terms of space and time.

To sum up: interdependence is a complex, asymmetric and rigid relation, placing two parties in a state of mutual vulnerability, which can prompt either cooperation or conflict. These factors will be considered in the case study presented below.

5.4. The Sudan: A history of contested self-determination and cursed independence

The recent history of the Southern Sudanese liberation struggle substantiates many of the points made above about the multi-faceted character of self-determination. It also shows the reason why self-determination has come to be identified with secession and the eventual pitfalls of such reduction.

¹⁴ A useful literature review on the subject can be found in Edward D. Mansfield and Brian M. Pollins, “The Study of Interdependence and Conflict: Recent Advances, Open Questions, and Directions for Future Research,” *The Journal of Conflict Resolution* 45, no. 6 (2001): 834–859.

¹⁵ Nye, *Independence*, note 10 above, p, 132.

The events unfolded after the separation between Sudan and South Sudan witness how the emergence of interdependence in the course of a self-determination process needs to be managed smoothly in order to avoid it becoming a source of renewed conflict. At the same time, it is argued here that the management of interdependence may offer an unexpected opportunity to address, at least in part, the long-standing governance issues which stand at the roots of Sudan's and the Horn's multiple wars.

Since its independence in 1956, Sudan was the theatre of several civil conflicts, engendered by an unbalanced relationship between a dominant "centre" and the vast peripheries of what was once Africa's largest country.¹⁶ The memory of the slave trade, colonial policies of administrative centralization and regional segregation, complaints of political and economic marginalization after independence, all contributed to the creation and exacerbation of tensions in the peripheral regions, and particularly in the South. Here, an uprising against the central government started in August 1955, a few months before the declaration of independence. It then became a full-blown war around 1962.¹⁷ The Addis Ababa Agreement, signed in 1972 under the regime of Jafaar al-Nimeiry, temporarily put an end to hostilities, allowing the creation of an autonomous regional government in the South while preserving the unity of the country. However, delays and deficiencies in the implementation of the Agreement, bitter divisions among the Southern leaders and destabilizing actions by the regime resulted in the resumption of conflict in 1983.

The failure of the Addis Ababa Agreement was to become a strong argument in favour of secession among southerners. Khartoum had been given a chance to prove its good will in conceding the South a sufficient degree of regional autonomy and a fair distribution of resources for the sake of maintaining the unity of the country, but it had reneged on its promises. As the northern élite had proved unwilling to reform the centralized, unbalanced and discriminatory character of the State, there was no alternative to partition.

¹⁶ Douglas H. Johnson, *The Root Causes of Sudan's Civil Wars* (Oxford: James Currey, 2011).

¹⁷ Scopas S. Poggo, *The First Sudanese Civil War: Africans, Arabs, and Israelis in the Southern Sudan, 1955-1972* (New York, NJ: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

Much surprisingly, the movement that took the mantle of the struggle in 1983 did not espouse a separatist agenda. John Garang, leader of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A), claimed to fight for a "New Sudan," which he envisaged as a democratic, pluralistic and secular country.¹⁸ Garang was adamant that the real issue at stake was not the "southern problem" but creating a State where all the different ethnic, cultural and religious identities of Sudan could find expression. The "New Sudan" doctrine allowed his movement to draw support from non-Southern populations calling for a more equitable distribution of political power and economic resources.

Why did then Garang accept the eventuality of a referendum on unity or secession for the South, when he signed a Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) with the Government in 2005?¹⁹ The reasons for this controversial choice lie in the strong pressure in favour of secession coming from his movement and the southern population at large, but also in the persistent unwillingness shown by the northern élite towards a more equitable and inclusive governance system. The Khartoum Government had repeatedly pledged, during the 1990s, to guarantee the right of self-determination to the South. This however translated into the signing of "paper agreements" whose outcome was merely the allotment of governmental seats to dissident southern leaders. Moreover, the federal system introduced by the government in 1994 and the democratization process initiated at the end of the decade proved to be tools to consolidate the power of the ruling National Congress Party (NCP) by extending its patronage networks, rather than efforts to balance the centre-periphery dichotomy and unlock the Sudanese political system.

Secession therefore became the only "exit option" after the goal of the "New Sudan" had proven unattainable. The emergence of armed rebellion in Darfur, Eastern Sudan and the Nubian North added further evidence to the fact that the problems of Sudan extended well beyond the South, and the repression that hit dissent in these areas confirmed that the ruling élite in Khartoum was determined to maintain its dominant position.

¹⁸ Mansour Khalid and John Garang, *The Call for Democracy in Sudan* (London: Keegan Paul, 1992).

¹⁹ "The Comprehensive Peace Agreement between the Government of the Republic of the Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement, Sudan People's Liberation Army", January 9, 2005, <http://unmis.unmissions.org/Portals/UNMIS/Documents/General/cpa-en.pdf> (accessed on October 10, 2012). An account of the peace negotiations can be found in Ruth Iyob and Gilbert M. Khadiagala, *Sudan: the Elusive Quest for Peace* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2006).

Garang held a last card in his hands: the CPA provision for democratic elections at all levels before the referendum. If he succeeded in being elected President, the “New Sudan” could have become more than a dream. His untimely death in a helicopter accident seven months after the signing of the CPA, therefore, dispelled all hopes that the unity of the country could be maintained.

5.5. *A civilised divorce*²⁰

Despite the scepticism of many Sudanese and foreign observers, the referendum on Southern self-determination was held on time on the 9th – 15th of January 2011, resulting in an overwhelming vote for independence.

The explosion of armed insurrections led by the northern section of the SPLM/A in Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile²¹ in June and September 2011, only reminded that the fundamental problems of governance affecting Sudan had not been resolved with the secession of the South: they had just been displaced to other peripheral regions.

It may be argued at least that South Sudan can now find its way towards full self-determination. Though this is undeniably true, the two new-born countries look like Siamese twins: each one’s survival depends on the other.

²⁰ The title of the paragraph has been inspired by an insightful piece written by Ahmed Badawi, “Sudan and South Sudan: A Civilised Divorce,” *African Arguments* (blog), October 3, 2012, <http://africanarguments.org/2012/10/03/sudan-and-south-sudan-a-civilised-divorce-by-ahmed-badawi/> (accessed on October 2012).

²¹ Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile are two northern regions bordering South Sudan. During the war, the SPLM/A managed to recruit thousands of soldiers among non-Arab tribes in these areas. Khartoum accepted to include the two regions in the CPA negotiations only after reiterated insistences by the SPLM/A. The latter however was not able – and, maybe, not determined enough – to extract meaningful concessions from the Government in order to address the neglect of Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile. Once the referendum on South Sudan self-determination was held, the Sudanese army moved to disarm the SPLM/A battalions in the two regions. The former rebels refused, and before the matter could be solved through political dialogue, armed confrontations erupted.

I have tried to synthesize the multi-dimensional nature of interdependence between Sudan and South Sudan in the matrix below²²:

| | MACRO-LEVEL | MESO-LEVEL | MICRO-LEVEL |
|-----------------------------|---|--|--|
| POLITICAL BONDS | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CITIZENSHIP ISSUES AND MINORITIES • FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT AND IMMIGRATION POLICY • REFUGEES • BORDER MANAGEMENT • MUTUAL SUPPORT TO OPPOSITION GROUPS • ARMS RACE • FOREIGN RELATIONS | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BORDER MANAGEMENT • MUTUAL SUPPORT TO OPPOSITION GROUPS | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BORDER MANAGEMENT |
| ECONOMIC BONDS | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OIL • WATER MANAGEMENT • INFRASTRUCTURES • CIRCULATION OF GOODS AND CAPITALS • INTERNATIONAL DEBT | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OIL • TRANS-BOUNDARY TRADE • INFRASTRUCTURES • CROSS-BORDER PASTORALIST SEASONAL MIGRATIONS | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TRANS-BOUNDARY TRADE • INFRASTRUCTURES • CROSS-BORDER PASTORALIST SEASONAL MIGRATIONS • ACCESS TO WATER |
| SOCIO-CULTURAL BONDS | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • COMMON HISTORY | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TRANS-BOUNDARY ETHNIC GROUPS • COMMON HISTORY | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TRANS-BOUNDARY ETHNIC GROUPS • COMMON HISTORY • ARABIC AS A <i>LINGUA FRANCA</i> |

It would take too much space to delve into the details of every single issue included in this table, and I am aware there may well be omissions. What is relevant to my analysis however is the fact that most of the issues listed in the table above have been at the core of the North-South conflict for decades. Separation has redressed the power balance between the two actors in favour of the weaker, meaning that Southerners now have the opportunity to talk with Khartoum on a peer-to-peer basis, as they have been doing in the framework of the African Union (AU)-sponsored talks since June 2010. However, secession *in itself* has not

²² I am grateful to the Austrian Institute for International Politics, the Austrian Institute for European and Security Policy and the Politische Akademie der ÖVP for having shared with me the documents of the “Interdependencies for sustainable peace” workshops, attended by high-ranking NCP and SPLM officials.

provided the solution to any of these questions: conversely, it has exacerbated some of them and has created new bones of contention, such as the management of oil exports.

It has been noted above that three-quarters of the total Sudanese oil reserves are found in the South, but the pipeline used to transport the crude to Port Sudan runs for over 1500km into Northern territory. The huge gap between the transit fee the Government of South Sudan (GoSS) was available to pay and the request of its Northern counterpart – respectively \$1 and \$36 for each barrel of oil – has proved hard to bridge, and after Khartoum started to seize oil to make up for what it considered unpaid fees, Juba retaliated by halting all extractions in January 2012.

The definition of the North-South border has become another controversial process, as Sudan and South Sudan disagree on at least five segments of the 2100 km-long line separating them.²³ Linked to the border issue is the conflict over the final status of Abyei, an oil-rich area inhabited by the Ngok Dinka people and seasonally crossed by Misseriyah nomads – both important constituencies for the SPLM/A and the NCP respectively.²⁴ Abyei has proved to be the thorniest open issue among Khartoum and the GoSS, leading them to two armed confrontation – in May 2008 and May 2011 – which could have easily escalated into a wider conflict. The respective armies have since withdrawn from the area, allowing the deployment of the UN Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA) made up of Ethiopian troops.

The issue of border management goes beyond the simple demarcation of the boundary. Border regions are endowed with huge economic resources: 35% of the population of the two countries, 60% of animal resources (which are often subject to trans-border seasonal migration), 80% of semi-mechanized farming and almost 100% of oil reserves are found in the ten states straddling the North-South border.²⁵ The same areas are nonetheless home to

²³ International Crisis Group (ICG), *Sudan: Defining the North-South Border*, Africa Briefing No. 75 (Juba, Khartoum, Nairobi, Bruxelles: 2010), <http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/africa/horn-of-africa/sudan/B75-sudan-defining-the-north-south-border.aspx> (accessed on October 10, 2012).

²⁴ Douglas H. Johnson, "Why Abyei Matters," *African Affairs* 107, no. 426 (2008): 1–19.

²⁵ Abdalbasit Saeed, *Challenges Facing Sudan after Referendum Day 2011. Persistent and Emerging Conflict in the North-South Borderline States* (Bergen: Chr. Michelsen Institute, 2010), <http://www.cmi.no/publications/publication/?3926=challenges-facing-sudan-after-referendum-day-2011> (accessed on October 2012). Being Sudan and South Sudan two federal States (the latter at least until a permanent Constitution is adopted), their regions are referred to as "states".

some of the most marginalized peoples of the country, such as the Nuba in Southern Kordofan and the Ingessana in Blue Nile. This is due to a model of development based on the systematic exploitation of the peripheries at the benefit of the centre, which has been a constant feature of state-formation in the Horn of Africa.²⁶

The creation of the North-South border resulted in considerable economic losses for the populations inhabiting the area, threatening to exacerbate local tensions which could escalate into wider conflicts. The decision to create a safe demilitarized border zone, as agreed by Sudan and South Sudan on September 26, 2012, may prove useful as a temporary solution, provided that the buffer zone does not become a “no man’s land” where illegal traffics – including arms smuggling – thrive. The demilitarized area should be a “soft-border,” or better an “integration zone,” to preserve and strengthen the historic links binding the communities that straddle the North-South divide. However, the marginal role given to local and regional representatives during the post-referendum talks confirms a top-down approach by the ruling élites whose effect is to further increase discontent and unrest in the peripheral regions.²⁷

The precedents of Ethiopia and Eritrea, India and Pakistan, among others indicate the explosive potential of border disputes. Jaroslav Tir and Pau Diehl have demonstrated that territorial disputes create a high likelihood of reiterated and intense armed confrontation.²⁸ Therefore, a final definition of the border stands as a precondition for an effective management of interdependence.

At the time of writing, dialogue between Khartoum and Juba is stuck on the implementation of the “Cooperation Agreement between Sudan and South Sudan”, signed on September 27, 2012.²⁹ The transport fee for oil exports has been determined, but Khartoum has vowed not to

²⁶ See Johnson, *The Root’s Causes*, note 16 above, for Sudan; John Markakis, *Ethiopia: The Last Two Frontiers* (London: James Currey, 2011) for Ethiopia.

²⁷ An interesting experience has been tried at the state level in this regard, that of *tamazuj* meetings. Tamazuj is the Arabic word for “intermingling,” and served as the title for two workshops – the first held in Kadugli, February 2010, the second in Aweil, July 2010 – which gathered the governors of the ten states straddling the North-South border in order to foster mutual cooperation. Despite the concrete proposals put forward to increase integration between the two sides of the border, the idea of *tamazuj* has remained on paper.

²⁸ Jaroslav Tir and Pau Diehl, “Geographic Dimensions of Enduring Rivalries,” *Political Geography* 21, no. 2 (2002): 263–286.

²⁹ “The Cooperation Agreement between the Republic of the Sudan and the Republic of South Sudan”, September 27, 2012, <http://sites.tufts.edu/reinventingpeace/2012/09/27/sudan-and-south-sudan-full-text-of-agreements/> (accessed on October 10, 2012).

allow southern oil flow on its soil unless Juba halt its alleged support for the SPLM-North fighting in Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile. The final status of Abyei has not yet been determined, and the constitution of the demilitarized buffer zone remains on paper.

The turbulent path of the post-referendum negotiations between Sudan and South Sudan reveals the illusion of considering territorial partition as a short-cut to self-determination in a condition of intense interdependence created by historical, geographic, political and economic factors.

5.6. *The “secession trap”*

At this point of the analysis, however, one could well argue that, although secession *per se* doesn't guarantee the achievement of self-determination, it may be considered as a step *towards* it. Although this is true in principle, the experience of the last two decades shows that the circumstances leading to secession and the political environment that follows it actually hinder the development of democratic governance.

I define this situation as “secession trap”, whose first element pertains to the very concepts of self-determination and secession. While the call for self-determination is essentially a demand for equal *rights* by a discriminated community, when conflated with separatist claims it tends to become an issue of coincidence between a defined *territory* and that very community. However, dividing a state is the same as breaking a magnet: you will always end up having a plus and a minus, a majority and a minority. The identification between a homogeneous national community and the territory of a state is a condition which has proven almost impossible to realize, except with coercion. As the Indian sociologist Tharailath Koshy Oommen has written: “the nation-state was an aspiration, in fact an unfortunate aspiration, which never realized even in Western Europe.”³⁰

³⁰ Tharailath Koshy Oommen, *Citizenship, Nationality and Ethnicity: Reconciling Competing Identities* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1997), p. 137.

Post-secession governments tend to attribute the new-born state a one-sided cultural, linguistic and religious identity, failing to recognize the rights of minorities, particularly when these belong to the same community of the old rulers. This has been the case with ethnic Serbs in Kosovo, and, more recently, with Northern Sudanese in South Sudan.

As for civil and political rights, although neither positive nor negative bias can be attributed *ex ante* to post-secession political regimes, some relevant observations can be drawn from the Horn of Africa. The first is that a newborn state is usually fragile in many respects. From internal ones such as establishing borders control, setting up an efficient administration, and consolidate the monopoly of force, to external ones, like normalizing its relations with the rump state and achieving full international recognition. The self-perception of vulnerability often leads to the closure of political space for the sake of stability and cohesiveness, which may last for a temporary phase of consolidation, but may also evolve into a paranoid authoritarian regime, as is the case with the government of the People's Front for Democracy and Justice (PFDJ) in Eritrea.³¹

Moreover, it must be noted that separatist struggles tend to be monopolized by a single liberation movement, which then often becomes the dominant political actor on the post-secession scene. This endows the new country with a *de facto* one-party political system though in most cases under a democratic guise. South Sudan is a case in point in this regard. When the first general elections after the signing of the CPA were held in 2010, the SPLM/A won the race for the Presidency, gained a 95% majority in Parliament, and obtained 27 out of the 32 ministers in the new Government.³² Although these results reflected the actual popularity of the Movement, the SPLM/A's subsequent dominance over the constitutional process, complains of marginalization by minorities and the corruption scandals which

³¹ It may be argued that the Eritrean struggle for independence was not a "secessionist" cause, as Eritrea never considered itself as part of Ethiopia. This distinction needs to be stressed given its sensitivity for the Eritrean national consciousness and historical narrative. However, the Eritrean case can be assimilated in many respects to other uprisings of an explicitly secessionist nature as Eritrea was part of the Ethiopian state since 1952, first as a federated entity, and then as a unilaterally annexed province. The aim of the Eritrean independence movement was that of wresting sovereignty from a political authority perceived as oppressive and illegitimate, and many of the issues Ethiopia and Eritrea faced after 1993 were experienced by a country facing partition: border demarcation, currency conversion, infrastructure management, just to name a few.

³² Giorgio Musso and Raphaëlle Guibert, "Sud Soudan: Relations Interethniques et Rebellions Armées", *Les Carnets du Cap*, no. 15 (2011) : 85–108.

involved Government officials are at least partially attributable to the abuses resulting from unchecked power.

It is significant to compare the cases of Eritrea and South Sudan with that of Somaliland. Due to the general lack of external support for the independence of Somaliland, the Somali National Movement (SNM) has been forced to build on its internal legitimacy and to devise effective mechanisms of popular representation, creating what some regard as the most effective democracy in the Horn of Africa.³³ In 2010, a long-delayed presidential election resulted in the victory of the opposition candidate Ahmed Silanyo, defeating the incumbent president Dahir Riyale Kahnin. It was an exceptional example of democratic alternation in a region where political succession occurs mostly through force or nomination. Although Somaliland has not yet achieved external sovereignty, it may reasonably be argued that its citizens have walked a long distance on the path towards self-determination. This is the point: self-determination is a *process* rather than an *outcome*.³⁴ In this perspective, secession can sometimes be considered a step ahead, but in many cases it has proven to be one step ahead and two steps back.

One last aspect which adds to our characterization of secession as a “trap” pertains to what Stanley Hoffman has called “the elusiveness of modern power”.³⁵ The rise of supra-national actors, be them economic as multinational corporations or political as international organizations, the increasing interconnectedness of the world economy and the emergence of global issues – such as climate change – is questioning the absoluteness of sovereignty and the ability of nation-states to freely determine their policies. Following the same reasoning, prominent Oromo activist Leenco Lata has concluded that “those who are fighting for self-determination are fighting for powers that they too would not exercise in full.”³⁶

A wider geopolitical perspective cannot be overlooked when considering the issue of self-determination and secession. Independence movements tend to compensate their weaker stand

³³ Mark Bradbury, *Becoming Somaliland* (Oxford: James Currey, 2008).

³⁴ For instance, the ongoing debate about the future of the European Union should be considered as the current stage of self-determination for the European peoples, whereas one century ago self-determination led to the establishment of nation-states.

³⁵ Stanley Hoffmann, “Notes on the Elusiveness of Modern Power,” *International Journal* 30, no. 2 (1975): 183–206.

³⁶ Leenco Lata, *The Horn of Africa as Common Homeland* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press 2004): 51, 67.

vis-à-vis governments by recurring to foreign support. But the political debt contracted during the struggle has to be paid back when the goal of independence is achieved, creating bonds of political and economic dependence for the new country. This is evident in the case of Kosovo's alliance with the USA, and to a lesser extent it is visible in South Sudan's relations with its neighbours – Uganda, Kenya and Ethiopia above all – and with Washington as well.

Our analysis therefore seems to lead to a vicious circle: the denial of self-determination creates the conditions for secession, which in turn leads to new forms of internal and external oppression. It is clear that a deep restructuring of governance is the only solution to this conundrum. Though such an outcome can be achieved only through an internal reform process, we argue that an institutionalized management of interdependence at the regional level can offer systemic incentives for the rebalancing of the centre-periphery inequalities affecting the States of the Horn of Africa.

5.7. Interdependency and self-determination at the regional level

By extending our analysis to the interdependencies existing at the regional level, a very complex array of factors enters the equation. First and foremost comes an inescapable geopolitical reality: the landlocked-riparian States dichotomy, which is essential in understanding interdependencies in the region, particularly in the presence of export-oriented economies as those concerned in our case.

The most populated country of the Horn of Africa (Ethiopia), the one with the most dynamic economy (Uganda) and the one with the highest concentration of oil, water and arable land (South Sudan) do not have access to the sea. Conversely, riparian states are less endowed with natural and mineral resources, but constitute the hub for the region's exports.³⁷ The interruption of trade corridors from the inland to the seaside for political reasons can create serious economic problems for the countries involved. Ethiopia and Eritrea know the story

³⁷ Yemane Beyene, "The Need for More Intra-Region Trade and Economic Interdependence in the Horn of Africa," *Merging Parallels: The Academic Journal of the Euclid University Consortium*, no.1 (2007): 26–41; Roy Love, *Economic Drivers of Conflict and Cooperation in the Horn of Africa. A Regional Perspective and Overview*, Briefing Paper, Africa Programme (London: Chatham House, 2009), http://www.chathamhouse.org.uk/files/15571_bp1209horn.pdf (accessed on October 10, 2012).

well: after the eruption of war between them in 1998, Addis Ababa lost access to the Assab Port, which handled 80-85% of its exports, while Eritrea lost 22.6% of its total public revenues as a result of missing port fees.³⁸

Relations of economic interdependence extend well beyond the issue of access to the sea. Energy policy, for instance, is another key concern for governments in the area. Sudan is currently the only oil producer among the IGAD countries, with Uganda expected to follow in the coming years. Most of Sudanese crude is directed to East Asia, but in recent years Ethiopia has started to import an increasing quantity of oil from Sudan. At the same time, under the late Prime Minister Meles Zenawi Ethiopia has embarked upon an ambitious energy plan centred on the development of hydroelectric resources. The much-discussed Grand Ethiopian Renaissance and Gilgel Gibe III dams are the two pillars of a strategy which aims to increase Ethiopia's energy production from the current 2,000 MW to 10,000 MW in 2015, yet only a portion of the estimated 45,000 MW that the country could derive from hydropower.³⁹ A Chatam House report published in 2011 suggested a "black gold for blue gold" agreement between Sudan and Ethiopia, which could be beneficial for both parties and would cement a strategic economic partnership between the two countries. However suggestive and even rational this solution may be, its implementation is less probable, most of all because Ethiopian dam projects are opposed by downstream countries, and particularly by Sudan (which, for its part, is investing heavily in hydroelectric power), Egypt and Kenya.

This leads us to the broader issue regarding the sharing of the Nile waters. Negotiations have been going on since 1999 in the framework of the World Bank-sponsored Nile Basin Initiative, which includes representatives from Egypt, Sudan, Ethiopia, Uganda, Kenya, Rwanda, Burundi, Tanzania and the Democratic Republic of Congo, plus Eritrea as observer and, one year after its independence, South Sudan as a full member.⁴⁰ The exploitation of the

³⁸ Sally Healy, *Hostage to Conflict*. Prospects for Building Regional Economic Cooperation in the Horn of Africa (London: Chatham House 2011): 34-35, <http://www.chathamhouse.org/publications/papers/view/179951> (accessed on October 10, 2012).

³⁹ Figures are taken from Healy, *Hostage to Conflict*, note 39 above, 38, quoting from the official "Ethiopia Growth and Transformation Plan 2010/11 to 2014/15."

⁴⁰ Basic information about the NBI can be found on its official website <http://www.nilebasin.org/newsite/> (accessed on October 10, 2012).

Nile waters is currently regulated by two agreements negotiated respectively by Egypt and the United Kingdom in 1929⁴¹ and the second by Egypt and Sudan in 1959⁴².

These determine Egypt and Sudan's shares of usable water without recognizing any right in terms of ownership or use to the upstream countries.⁴³ In May 2010, all countries adhering to the NBI, except Egypt, Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo, signed a draft cooperation agreement which erases the fixed shares provided for by the 1959 Agreement, but most of all scraps Egypt of its current veto power on any development project affecting the flow of the Nile.⁴⁴ Recognizing the sensitivity of the issue, Ethiopia and its allies have put on hold the ratification of the Agreement by their parliaments, hoping that the new Egyptian leadership may be more flexible than his predecessors.

The row over the Nile offers a perfect example of the double-edged nature of interdependence. The use of new technologies and a balance between the different natural processes at play (siltation, soil erosion and evaporation just to name but a few) could provide the ground for win-win solutions. However, national security imperatives and political conflicts lead the situation in the opposite direction. As noted by Sally Healy, states in the Horn of Africa perceive an inescapable trade-off between economic cooperation and their national security interests, giving priority to the latter at the expense of the former.⁴⁵

⁴¹ "Exchange of Notes Regarding the Use of Waters of the Nile for Irrigation Purposes (Egypt-United Kingdom)," May 7, 1929, 93 *League of Nations Treaty Series* 43.

⁴² "Agreement between the Republic of Sudan and the United Arab Republic on the Full Utilization of the Waters of the Nile (Egypt-Sudan)," December 12, 1959, 453 *United Nations Treaty Series* 51.

⁴³ Egypt and Sudan are allotted 48b m³/year and 4b m³/year respectively as per the 1929 Treaty, and fixed ratios of 1/3 and 2/3 respectively of the additional amount of usable water resulting from the Aswan High Dam plus half each of any future increase according to the 1959 Agreement. This has resulted in Egypt and Sudan taking almost 90% of the total water flow, while the rest is almost entirely lost through evaporation. Simon A. Mason, *From Conflict to Cooperation in the Nile Basin* (Zurich: ETH Zurich, 2004), <http://e-collection.library.ethz.ch/view/eth:27328> (accessed on October 10, 2012).

⁴⁴ "Agreement On the Nile River Basin Cooperative Framework," May 14, 2010 (the Agreement has been signed by six out of the nine state parties to the NBI, but it needs ratification by all national parliaments before entering into force), http://internationalwaterlaw.org/documents/regionaldocs/Nile_River_Basin_Cooperative_Framework_2010.pdf (accessed on October 12, 2012). For an analysis of the negotiations leading to the controversial signature see Yacob Arsano, *Negotiations for a Nile-Cooperative Framework Agreement*, ISS Paper No. 222 (Pretoria, Addis Ababa: Institute for Security Studies, January 2011).

⁴⁵ Healy, *Hostage to Conflict*, note above 39, p. 19.

A reason for mutual mistrust comes from the high occurrence of interstate conflicts in the Horn, if compared to other African regions. The 1977 Ogaden War between Ethiopia and Somalia and the 1998 war between Ethiopia and Eritrea are the most explicit examples of this trend, but in many other cases conflict was conducted through proxies, as between Sudan and Eritrea or Sudan and Uganda throughout the 1990s.⁴⁶ Two major civil wars, the Sudanese and Somali ones, have attracted intervention by neighbours either in the form of direct intervention – as in Somalia since 2006 – or support for local rebel movements – as Eritrea, Ethiopia, Uganda and Kenya did with the SPLM/A in Sudan, provoking a retaliation of the same character by Khartoum. Among the other drivers of conflict one should consider trans-boundary ethnic ties, the most prominent case being that of the ethnic Somali population in Ethiopia, Djibouti and Kenya. Religion has also played an important role as a source of tension within and between the states of the region. In this regard, the contrast between Ethiopia, a country which has seen dominance of Christianity for long time, and surrounding Muslim states being a recurrent theme in the history of the Horn of Africa throughout the centuries. Again, thinking at Sudan one cannot forget to add the greed for natural resources to the list, though not as pervasive as in the Great Lakes or in West Africa.

Such a complex interplay of factors has created an intricate web of conflicts which is difficult to disentangle. Most of all, endemic regional instability fosters a climate of mutual mistrust, entrenched hostility between countries and animosity among leaders, which is the worst possible environment for cooperation. How then can interdependence be turned into an opportunity?

5.8. The need for institutions

The need to overcome the security vs. integration trade-off was recognized when the then Inter-Governmental Authority for Drought and Desertification (IGADD) was reformed to become the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) in 1996.⁴⁷ The regional

⁴⁶ Jan Abbink, “Ethiopia-Eritrea: Proxy Wars and Prospects of Peace in the Horn of Africa,” *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 21, no. 3 (2003): 407–426.

⁴⁷ For a short analysis of IGAD’s history and role see Sally Healy, *Peacemaking in the Midst of War: An Assessment of IGAD’s Contribution to Regional Security in the Horn of Africa*, Crisis States Research Centre

body was entrusted with the task of actively promoting conflict-resolution and stability as a prerequisite for inter-state cooperation. Among African Regional Economic Communities (RECs) IGAD is comparable only to the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) for its acting as a regional peace-maker and not just as a forum for economic integration.⁴⁸

To date, IGAD has embarked on two mediation efforts: the Mbgathi Peace Process for Somalia and the negotiations between the Government of Sudan and the SPLM/A. In the first case, the signing of a peace agreement in late 2004 only ushered a new chapter of the conflict, with the subsequent rise to power of the Islamic Court Union (ICU) and the ensuing Ethiopian intervention in December 2005. The latter event showed IGAD's inadequacy in handling a conflict among its member states, as military intervention was unilaterally decided by Addis Ababa without IGAD taking a clear stand on the matter. This prompted Eritrea to suspend its membership in the organization and later gave Asmara the pretext to support Islamist insurgents in Somalia. With IGAD out of the game, the AU took over responsibility with the creation of a multinational peacekeeping mission and the launch of its own peace process.

Conversely, IGAD-led negotiations between Sudan and the SPLM/A succeeded against all expectations, resulting in the signing of the CPA in 2005 after eleven years of intermittent talks. Substantial assistance from international partners, first and foremost the United States, was key to the accomplishment of the peace process.

Despite its mixed performance, IGAD has proven to be an important forum where internal conflicts can be dealt with in a broader dimension. In highly interdependent regional systems such as the Horn of Africa, institutions are essential in avoiding interdependence becoming a cause of conflict. The lack of institutions adds to the perception of vulnerability, creates information asymmetries and reduces the opportunities for political, rather than military, solutions.

working papers series 2, no. 59 (London: LSE Crisis States Working Paper, London School of Economics, 2009), <http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/28482/> (accessed on October 10, 2012).

⁴⁸ Bjørn Møller, Africa's sub-regional organisations: seamless web or patchwork?, Working Paper no. 56 (London: Crisis States Research Centre, 2009), <http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/28486/1/WP56.2MollerRO.pdf> (accessed on October 10, 2012).

To see how institutions make the difference, one only needs to look at the diverging cases of Eritrea and South Sudan. In 1993, Eritrea declared its independence after participating – together with the rebel-turned-government Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) – to the armed struggle that led to the overthrow of the *Derg* regime in Addis Ababa. Trusting in a solid alliance forged in the course of a long common battle, the two governments didn't bother to give their relationship “an institutional and legal framework that went beyond loose understandings and gentlemen's agreements.”⁴⁹ But when disputes arouse – such as over the introduction of the *nakfa*, a new currency replacing the Ethiopian *birr*, by the Eritrean government – there was no forum to compose differences. In a short time, a spiral of misunderstanding, mutual accusations and threats led the two countries to war.

In the Sudanese case, paradoxically, the high level of animosity between the two leaderships made everyone aware of the need to maintain an institutional framework for dialogue. Sudan and South Sudan have been on the brink of war countless times since 2005, but the existence of different bilateral institutions – some, as the Assessment and Evaluation Commission or the AUHIP, involving a significant international presence – ensured that channels of communications were never completely severed and helped to keep the conflict on a political level.

This doesn't mean that institutions always accomplish the task they are entrusted, but political dialogue has an inherent value: it helps to build confidence and defuses the likelihood of violence. The Nile Basin Initiative is a case in point in this regard. It hasn't yet produced a shared compromise in over ten years of talks and meetings, but it has shaped a draft Framework Agreement, forced Egypt to take into consideration the reasons of upstream countries and, hopefully, convinced Cairo and Khartoum that some sort of concession is unavoidable. Without this permanent forum for dialogue, we would probably be here talking about the first “hydrowar” of our times.

⁴⁹ Ruth Iyob, “The Ethiopian–Eritrean Conflict: Diasporic vs. Hegemonic States in the Horn of Africa, 1991–2000,” *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 38, no. 4 (2000): 659–682 (676).

5.9. *Borderlands as resources*

Inter-governmental institutions cannot be the only instrument to manage regional interdependencies. The multi-layered character of complex interdependence makes efforts at the local level as needed as international diplomacy. In particular, as seen in the case of Sudan, border areas are characterized by a high “density” of interdependence. Therefore, focusing on interdependencies at the regional level requires governments to invest on borderlands as essential hubs for cooperation and integration.⁵⁰

If put into practice, this would invert a common pattern of governance in the region which sees border regions as hotspots of instability, leading to their neglect and repression. Up to now, governments have proved more interested in keeping conflicts peripheral rather than in solving them, but the marginalization of turbulent peripheries has been a perfect recipe for the emergence of separatist causes.

One of the instruments through which governments can foster development in the border areas is to invest on already existing trans-boundary trade networks. Most of these are informal and escape control by the state authorities. However, in terms of amount of goods and cash flows, they are all but marginal. Livestock trade, in particular, plays a central role for IGAD countries, constituting “a form of integrated economic activity that reinforces social and economic ties across borders, part of the social glue that holds the Horn of Africa together.”⁵¹ Animals are bred mainly in Somalia, in Ogaden, Sudan and South Sudan, and through a dense network of routes operating across borders they reach markets, in Africa, the Gulf and the Middle East. Cattle trade is but one example of how a concerted focus on interdependence by governments could lead to long-awaited investments in the most neglected areas of the region, defusing the sources of conflict within and between States.

⁵⁰ Healy, *Hostage to Conflict*, note 39 above; Dereje Feyissa and Markus Virgil Höhne, *Borders & Borderlands as Resources in the Horn of Africa* (Rochester, NY: James Currey 2010).

⁵¹ The quotation is from Healy, *Hostage to Conflict*, note 39 above, 29. More in-depth analyses of livestock trade across the region can be found in Nisar Majid, *Livestock Trade in the Djibouti, Somali and Ethiopian Borderlands*, Briefing Paper, Africa Programme (London: Chatham House, 2010), <http://www.chathamhouse.org.uk/publications/papers/view/-/id/938/> (accessed on October 10, 2012); Hussein A. Mahmoud, *Livestock Trade in the Kenyan, Somali and Ethiopian Borderlands*, Briefing Paper, Africa Programme (London: Chatham House, 2010) <http://www.chathamhouse.org.uk/publications/papers/view/-/id/937/> (accessed on October 10, 2012).

5.10. Conclusions

As the second part of this article has shown, a focus on the institutionalized management of interdependence may provide an innovative approach to reconcile the guarantee of the right to self-determination with the necessity to avoid the territorial fragmentation of the Horn of Africa region. A reassessment of the debate on self-determination is a precondition for this. The aspiration of peoples to a fair system of government, their call for the guarantee of fundamental rights and development in its widest meaning, express an inherent and never-ending human will. However, as the world changes, so the tools to realize popular struggles do and the nation-state has lost much of its appeal in this regard.

Sometimes, history digs deep furrows between peoples and separation becomes unavoidable. The conflict between Sudan and South Sudan was one of these cases, and secession has ended the marginalized status of Southerners in their own country. At the same time, partition has entailed high costs, raising new problems and failing to solve most of the old ones. For South Sudanese, the road to political stability and economic prosperity still passes from Khartoum. As the head of the Sudanese delegation in Addis Ababa once said, the two countries “are damned to live together.”⁵²

But living together can be turned into an opportunity to unlock regional integration and prompt a change in the current model of governance throughout the region, bridging the imbalances which have been at the heart of the multiple crises of the Horn of Africa. While drawing new borders risks creating new peripheries, the real answer to the call for self-determination is overcoming the centre-periphery divide.

Finally, recognizing borderlands as resources would strengthen the legitimacy of the State (and its control over the most opaque aspects of the economy), emphasize complementarities created by geopolitical factors and turn border regions from neglected peripheries to the vital nodes of an increasingly integrated regional economy.

⁵² “Sudan’s top negotiator criticizes anti-four freedoms campaign”, *Sudan Tribune*, October 2, 2012, <http://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article44089> (access October 2012).

After two decades of recurrent conflict, the Horn of Africa is more fragmented and prone to foreign influences than it has ever been since the time of independences. In order to invert this trend the ruling classes and the peoples of the region need to undertake a Copernican revolution: stop emphasizing what divide, and build on what bind them together. But in the time of globalization, paradoxically, this is a hard lesson for everyone.

CHAPTER SIX

LEAVING ERITREA, ENTERING THE WORLD: MIGRANTS IN THE MAKING

Magnus Treiber

Abstract

Each year since the end of the Ethio-Eritrean border war, tens of thousands of Eritrean citizens have fled their country. Most of them are young people deserting the coercive National Service or secondary school students avoiding forthcoming forced conscription. However, to leave Eritrea's dictatorial regime, its despotic rule and the country's ongoing crisis and to cross the border alive is just a first step in a journey fraught with uncertainty. The further geographical and biographical trajectories can rarely be planned and scheduled in detail. Beyond the refugee camps in Ethiopia or Sudan, a world of opportunities and restrictions opens up, the details of which are communicated among Eritrean migrants in different stations and stages of migration. Staying behind is rarely an option; hopes and expectations of a better life elsewhere are paramount. Again risks must be taken in order to seize the chance of a better life; rumours of success and failure at various destinations are frequently transmitted via modern communication technologies. While waiting in a less privileged place of a hierarchical world for one's chance to move on, daily life in these foreign places has to be learned and managed. Disillusionment, disappointment and often significant despair have to be overcome. Migrants may be born the moment they reach foreign ground, but the experiences which lay ahead of them and lessons to be learned therein will deeply transform their nature before they eventually reach more stable phases of life. In this article, I shed a light on existential questions, knowledge transformation, and learning processes in the migration process from the Horn of African region (with particular focus on Eritrea), while referring to typical places, biographical episodes, and shared experiences.¹

Key words: Eritrea, Horn of Africa, Migration, UNHCR, globalisation

6.1. Introduction

According to Tricia Hepner and David O'Kane, Eritrea should not only be seen as a guerrilla-government gone wild, but as the tragic attempt to save the political model of the sovereign

¹ This article evolved from the research project "Dynamic worlds of imagination – learning processes, knowledge and communication among young urban migrants from Eritrea and Ethiopia" within Bavaria's research cooperation "Migration and Knowledge" (ForMig, 2009-2012, www.formig.net).

nation state in the global South.² While in principle all nation states consider each other equal members of the United Nations, national sovereignty is more often than not undermined by political and economic ties and dependencies or extensive extraversion, as we can see in Africa as well as in present-day Europe. The ostentatious display of national symbols – such as flags, hymns, folkloric dresses or national dishes – can no longer hide the fact that important political decisions are made in global centres and not in the world’s periphery. Such global marginalisation may come along with internal fragmentation, subversive cross-border entanglement and transfer of basic national responsibilities to international NGOs, whose representatives will in return speak of ‘partnership’ and ‘sustainability’.

Willing to drop the Marxist-Leninist narrative, ironically outdated by the day of independence, Eritrea’s uncompromising and therefore victorious guerrilla-leaders have not been ready to jeopardise what they considered theirs after three decades of war: the new Eritrean nation and the power to decide on it. As we all know, however, the last 20 years have brought significant frustrations for President Isayas Afwerki and his entourage. Self-reliance as the chosen principle of national development did not make up for insufficient resources and expertise – What once was the ambitious dream of a national Taiwan- or Singapore-style development has quite modestly resulted in the tedious construction of micro-dams and the rebuilding of the picturesque, but ineffective colonial railway. Self-reliance as the chosen principle of national development did not replace lacking resources and expertise, identified as foreign heteronomy or irritating attempts at political influence or participation from inside or outside the country. From the state perspective, citizens had to be increasingly reminded of their predetermined role in the revolutionary and collective national project – and thus the mistake of relatively liberal years in the mid-90s was not repeated after the country’s border war with neighbouring Ethiopia and the experience of a political springtime during the 2000-2001 period. And while it had few, but influential advocates in the global political arena after independence – including the Clinton administration – the Eritrean government received neither unconditional support, nor the international respect it considered appropriate,

² Tricia R. Hepner and David O’Kane, “Biopolitics and Dilemmas of Development in Eritrea and Elsewhere,” in *Biopolitics, Militarism and Development: Eritrea in the Twenty-First Century*, ed. David O’Kane and Tricia R. Hepner (New York, NY: Berghahn 2009), 159–170. See also Tanja R. Müller, “From Rebel Governance to State Consolidation: Dynamics of Loyalty and the Securitisation of the State in Eritrea,” *Geoforum* 43, no. 4 (2012): 793–803.

especially when the United States, the European Union, and Israel decided to back Ethiopia during the border war. Closure to the international community has become Eritrea's answer to global flows and dependencies, heteronomy, and subversion of the nation state.

During my fieldwork between 2001 and 2005 in Asmara, some field informants spoke of Eritrea's self-imposed isolation as a "de-globalisation" – most describing the country simply as a "prison", which they were not allowed to leave until they finished their national service. While women have a chance for demobilisation in their mid- or late twenties, men now apparently have to reach their 50th birthday.³

In the shadow of this national project and its inner and at the same time global logic, Eritrea's whole social fabric has decisively changed since the 1990s. Today corruption is flourishing in Eritrea's national administration and military, once promoted as committed and of integrity. Nicole Hirt has recently published on this issue.⁴ Gaim Kibreab, David Bozzini, and Roberta Deambrosi as well as Peter Schmidt have extensively documented how mediocre officials, loyal through complicity, are suspiciously supervising the country's standstill and how corrupt officers use the army of recruits as construction workers or farm labourers for their own economic ends.⁵

³ In this article I rely on male informants, simply because they are more dominant in my field material. Their names in the text are fictitious and have been chosen by the respective informants themselves. 'Zeberga' is a name more common in Ethiopia than in Eritrea and 'Beteseb' literally means 'family member' or 'relative'. See also Magnus Treiber, "Khartoum and Addis Ababa as migratory stages between Eritrea and 'something'," in *Spaces in Movement. New Perspectives on Migration in African Settings*, ed. by Mustafa Abdalla et al. (Köln: Köppe in print).

⁴ Nicole Hirt, "'Dreams Don't Come True in Eritrea: Anomie and Family Disintegration due to the Structural Militarization of Society,'" GIGA Working Paper No. 119, 2010.

⁵ Gaim Kibreab, "Forced Labour in Eritrea," *Journal of Modern African Studies* 47, no. 1 (2009): 41–72; David M. Bozzini, "Low-tech Surveillance and the Despotism State in Eritrea," *Surveillance & Society* 9 (2011): 931–113; David Bozzini and Roberta Deambrosi, "Asmara ou les logiques de la contrainte," *POUNT* 4 (2010): 53–69; Peter R. Schmidt, "Postcolonial Silencing, Intellectuals, and the State: Views from Eritrea," *African Affairs* 109, no. 435 (2010): 293–313.

6.2. *Reasons to leave*

The story of one informant, Moges, is typical of many young professionals, who are often eager to perform, get ahead, and take over responsibility. The army is one of the few professional fields still providing some expert training and career opportunities to a certain segment of its officers. Moges made a career in a privileged technical section, enjoyed broad respect in his unit and – already unusual – managed to marry and plan a family future, when he was called one day into his superior’s office. Two agents, dressed in civilian clothes, took him without further explanation to Asmara’s Karshelli Prison, where he stayed for nine months in a dark basement cell. He was neither questioned nor informed on his arrest, nor was he allowed to contact his wife. Once a week, some yard exercise was granted. One can imagine that Moges spent agonising hours in prison thinking about the reason of his Kafkaesque fate; the only suitable explanation he found would be jealousy on his career by malevolent superiors or colleagues, who must have denounced him. His transfer to Tsetserat Prison was a tremendous relief. “I liked this prison”, he tells me in Addis Ababa in summer 2010. In Tsetserat he has learned Arabic, taught physics to befriended cell mates and was allowed to watch Premier-League-football on TV. He had to stay another year and nine months, but “I don’t count these”. His unexpected and unexplained release was his opportunity for a better life: He sold his car and prudently tried to find a broker to organise his and his wife’s escape through the Southern Mareb River into Ethiopia. As the two of them simply did not know what would come, they agreed that he should go first. When it was finally time to leave, his wife was pregnant, but they could not forego the opportunity.

Tens of thousands of Eritrean citizens are leaving their country every year since the end of the Ethio-Eritrean border war, most of them young people deserting the coercive national service or secondary school students avoiding forthcoming forced conscription. Not everyone has experienced imprisonment, the ill-famed “helicopter” torture or – in case of female soldiers – sexual exploitation and rape.⁶ Virtually everyone, however, knows someone who has. Any kind of individual exposure – misbehaviour, integrity, success – is likely to be sanctioned. Where uncertainty is the only constant, a broadly shared habitus of avoidance and

⁶ Service for Life: State Repression and Indefinite Conscription (New York, NY: Human Rights Watch, April 19, 2009), 30, 46.

inconspicuousness is cultivated, and while older people remember survival rules from the period of Ethiopian occupation, young people – especially those who went to secondary school or technical college – understandably opt for exit, ready to risk their life once, instead of risking it daily.

Another informant, Zeberga, left Asmara as a man in his mid-twenties. In an interview with the author in Washington, DC, from 2007, he states:

I wouldn't hesitate to take the kind of action that I took [again], because it was time, it was time for a change. After fulfilling my national obligations, my moral obligations [bursts out laughing], after being denied my rights, what do you expect me to do? Just sit there, like ah... the rest of the society? I am not blaming the rest of the society, but the government is intentionally kicking everyone there crippled. The choice was equally 50% risk, 50% chances. If I were to be caught at Tesseney probably I would be in Aderser [a prison belonging to Sawa military complex] or any other concentration camp, or I might have probably been killed by now, right? I assume that kind of possibility. You take such kind of risk, because you know that without taking those risks things wouldn't change, it would probably be worse. ...

If I were to stay in Asmara, just because I am afraid that crossing might entail some bad consequences, ... I would always live with my guilt. That's why people are leaving, all of them. Even inside you something pushes you, ... you get prepared to take appropriate actions. I had very, very good support by my parents, my father, my mother, my brother; my friends were always on my side.

Risking their lives in leaving de-globalised Eritrea renders most fleeing Eritreans into international refugees, who thereby become clients of the global refugee regime and its infrastructure. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees confirms this relationship and reflects it in its recently updated “Eligibility Guidelines for Assessing the International Protection Need of Asylum-Seekers from Eritrea,” which explicitly includes draft evaders and deserters of Eritrea's national service,⁷ while also reminding United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) staff to check for potential involvement in “a crime against peace, a war crime, or a crime against humanity,” any of which serve to disqualify an individual from receiving protection according to the Geneva Convention of

⁷ “UNHCR Eligibility Guidelines for Assessing the International Protection Need of Asylum Seekers from Eritrea,” UN High Commissioner for Refugees (April 20, 2011), <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/4dafa0ec2.html> (accessed September 24, 2012).

1951, article 1 F.⁸ Concerning Eritrean refugees, the latest UNHCR Statistical Yearbook gives a figure of 236,059 unsettled cases in its category of ‘total population of concern.’⁹ During the last decade, up to 15,000 new Eritrean refugees have been registered yearly in each Sudan and Ethiopia, despite the Eritrean government’s ‘shoot to kill’ policy on suspected emigrants.

Still in Eritrea, leaving, of course, is the most important issue. Very occasionally the later migration could be planned reliably and in more detail. Zeberga, who had already been enrolled in a funded study programme in Germany, might be one such example.

In addition to learning about the outside world through formal education, Eritrean urbanites often have access to internet, movies and international television channels. While this keeps them well aware of the tragedies in the Mediterranean Sea and the currently kidnapped migrants in the Sinai-desert, the outside world still represents a possible other. “I think I could live in America”, 30 year old Mussa told me during my last visit in Asmara in 2005. “Of course I didn’t experience it personally, but from what I have seen in the movies, I think I could manage.”

6.3. Confinement and control: Being a refugee

Becoming and being a refugee does not, however, open up the world of opportunities and possible developments which one might have imagined, neither in Shegerab-refugee camp in Eastern Sudan, nor in Shimelba or Mai Ayni-refugee camps in Ethiopia’s Northern Tigray region. It does not even provide UNHCR-administration, which is often misunderstood: The camps are strictly controlled by national agencies only. The UNHCR might have access, but is neither permanently in the camp nor exclusively in charge of Refugee-Status-Determination. Informants in Khartoum report of aggressive and corrupt Sudanese immigration officers and poor hygienic and housing conditions in Shegerab, each so intolerable that many new-comers do not stay the usual three weeks required to get their refugee ID, the so-called ‘yellow card,’

⁸ Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees (Geneva: UN High Commissioner for Refugees, December 2010), 16.

⁹ UNHCR Statistical Yearbook 2010 (Geneva: UN High Commissioner for Refugees, 2011), Annex Table 2.

but rather leave to Khartoum as soon as possible. The illegal transportation on Rashaida pickups to the Sudanese capital has become a well-established shuttle-service at the fare of \$100. Khartoum then offers the new arrivals a special migrant economy with employment opportunities in, for example, the construction sector or as housemaids or waitresses. Ethnic entrepreneurs provide Habesha food and clothing, as well as internet cafés and call shops which help to both reach out into the world, and facilitate further illegal migration opportunities.

By contrast, Ethiopian refugee administration agency is tight for fear of enemy spies among the camp population. Only immigration due to having recently enrolled at university or attending a family reunion, in case of family roots in Ethiopia, has been allowed. Refugees who are currently resettled to the USA had often been waiting 6 to 10 years in an isolated Ethiopian refugee camp; permission to leave is generally only given for extraordinary reasons, such as the need for special medical treatment. Beteseb, a 40 year old former member of the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF), arrived in 2004 and had to stay in Shimelba refugee camp until summer 2010. On his arrival, he had plans to move to Addis Ababa as soon as his security screening was finished. However, "they told me, you are a refugee," the full implications of which he did not understand until he arrived in the camp and was told that he was not allowed to leave. As a "member of this world" as he calls himself, 'they' – including UNHCR as well as the Ethiopian refugee agency – were thus severely violating his 'human rights'. Refugees were forbidden to seek a job outside the camp, he explains, but were rather forced to idle year after year, without income and perspective. Beteseb's professional skills eroded, skills which should have enabled him to care for himself and his family in the future, a story typical of long-term residents of the camp. Additionally, that residents lack proper information on the state of their refugee process makes Beteseb of the opinion that, "being refugee is worse than being in Eritrea." Why? In Eritrea one still has a moral right to flee and actively save and improve one's life, in Shimelba one's right to decide is taken away in the name of refugee protection – a topic that has been repeatedly taken up by Liisa Malkki, Barbara Harrell-Bond and Guglielmo Verdirame or Michael Kagan.¹⁰

¹⁰ Liisa H. Malkki, "Refugees and Exile," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 24 (1995): 495–523; Barbara Harrell-Bond and Guglielmo Verdirame, *Rights in Exile: Janus-faced Humanitarianism* (New York, NY:

In fleeing their homeland, Eritrean refugees must inevitably face a grim reality – their entry into the world was at a remarkably low level. Ironically, this is the same lesson that Eritrea’s victorious guerrilla-fighters learned during and after their struggle for independence, as both revolutionaries and rulers. Whatever reason one might have, whatever hardships one might have experienced, the world has not been waiting with relief.

6.4. *Self-reliance again*

Ermias, a 40 year-old computer-expert and Evangelical Christian who now resides in Addis Ababa, likens the refugee experience to the stories found in the biblical Book of Job. To be noticed by God, one must actively advocate for one’s own position, even against others, and find ways to push it forward. Even bribery may be resorted to in order to penetrate the local system, examples of which have been reported from Shimelba. In a discussion we had in Addis Ababa in September 2010, Ermias describes how he managed to leave Mai Ayni refugee camp after only one month. He explains, “Wherever you go, you have to know the institutions and how they work, so if you are a refugee, you have to understand who is doing what in the refugee camp.” He summarises his formula for success, knowingly winking.

A small group of deserted Eritrean officers in Khartoum has only recently been accepted into the UNHCR’s resettlement program after arriving in Sudan several years ago and having been rejected twice. They sought the expert support of experienced human-rights-activists, based in London, Amsterdam, and Geneva, and asked for their representation at UNHCR’s Headquarters. They approached the UNHCR protection officer as a group and insisted to re-apply as “special cases” – They described their heightened risk of being kidnapped by Eritrean security agents, the fear of which prevented them from interacting with Khartoum’s vast migrant community and required them to change mobile phone numbers and sleeping berths as often as was possible. Though the UNHCR’s status determination and resettlement process deals with a pool of applicants where “special cases” are the norm, it does give

Berghahn, 2005); Michael Kagan, “Frontier Justice: Legal Aid and UNHCR Refugee Status Determination in Egypt,” *Journal of Refugee Studies* 19, no.1 (2006): 45–68.

recognition to certain “Criteria for Determining Resettlement as the Appropriate Solution” such as “family reunification” or “legal and physical protection needs.”¹¹ It was by carefully appealing to these requirements with ‘NGO-style’ language, and not only because they had been in considerable danger, the group managed to get heard. They managed to contrast their unique case against the remaining masses of refugees from Eritrea and thus push their case.

Refugees in Khartoum and elsewhere who are less successful or privileged soon give up waiting for help and support through NGOs and UNHCR (which one informant describes as “a fake organisation”), choosing to abandon their refugee status. They instead become migrants in the broader sense of the word, returning to a formal refugee status only for promising reasons. As non-refugee migrants, problems have to be solved pragmatically, so opportunities have to be carefully examined and evaluated. Given their unprivileged status, this may of course involve irregular or illegal action.

First of all, cash has to be organised and a place to sleep must be found. This is most often an unfurnished shared flat, but might also be found in overcrowded houses in the Jiref, Deim or Sahafa neighbourhoods. Employment is also needed, which is generally facilitated by a *semsari* (‘messenger’ in Arabic). It is in this thriving city, which many formerly-isolated Eritrean migrants often find incredibly overwhelming, where opportunities for a more promising future might be found; not the rural refugee camp. Life can accelerate in the city, but may slow down as well if the expected development cannot be initiated. Beteseb, who had enough time in Shimelba, to dream multiple futures, and finally gets a permit to stay in Addis Ababa, optimistically comments: “If your program is million, you can do one...”

The lives of these and other migrants might be best described as informal, given the precarious and unprivileged situations and multiple restrictions faced by them. Indeed, even in the seemingly standardised refugee procedures, informal approaches may play a decisive role. This ambivalent interspace between societal closure and openness, between regulation and lack thereof, is one which refugees continually find themselves trapped, and is one which they might experience both as a limitation and a potential chance to enhance their agency.

¹¹ UNHCR Resettlement Handbook (Geneva: UN High Commissioner for Refugees, 2011).

To describe life with chronic uncertainty in crisis-ridden Guinea Bissau and subsequent migration to Europe, Henrik Vigh coins the concept of ‘social navigation.’ The concept not only focusses on action and movement in the face of consistent uncertainty, but also on landscapes in motion and social environments rendered unpredictable.¹² Though some aspects of this description might apply to the typical Eritrean migrant’s experience, the degree of uncertainty might be overstated if used in this context. Indeed, the skills related to surviving as an Eritrean refugee can, and must, be learned, and can serve to reduce the uncertainty faced during these experiences.¹³ Knowledge is acquired by Eritrean migrants in typical experiences in typical places, and is transferred over the fluid and geographically dispersed transnational milieu of these migrants. This knowledge is further refined through continuous comparison and calibration by the community as a whole, incorporating examples of success, failure and stagnation. This information, assembled from the collective wisdom of preceding migrants, serves as a map for forthcoming travels even where one’s position in it is uncertain and shifting, and where frames of reference are constantly changing.

Sociologist Hubert Knoblauch states, in the tradition of the constructivist German sociology of knowledge, that knowledge must be understood as constitutive for meaningful action.¹⁴ It can be objectified, imparted, and internalized and it should give orientation in one’s world. The widespread understanding of the UNHCR as a committed, competent, and powerful global government agency, subsequent experiences and examples of disappointment and untenable conspiracy theories, are reproduced, confirmed, and debated in the Eritrean migrants’ milieu, and there certainly make some sense. From the migrant’s perspective, faced with regulatory opacity and a lack of insight, the global refugee regime and the UNHCR, its main agent, are understood based on the way they are experienced. An understandable consequence is to either appropriate the vocabulary of human and refugee rights and initiate a

¹² Henrik Vigh, “Motion Squared: A Second Look at the Concept of Social Navigation,” *Anthropological Theory* 9 (2009): 419–438.

¹³ See also Magnus Treiber, “Lessons for Life. Two migratory portraits from Eritrea” in *Long Journeys. African Migrants on the Road*, ed. Alessandro Triulzi and Robert L. McKenzie (Leiden: Brill, 2013): 187-212.

¹⁴ Hubert Knoblauch, *Wissenssoziologie* (Konstanz: UVK, 2005), 142.

lobbying group, or to disregard the UNHCR and try a potentially more promising and often risky way to advance: self-reliance again!¹⁵

6.5. Conclusions

The promises of Eritrea's national project – liberation and independence, development and solidarity – have gone sour. A dictatorial regime in the global South fighting against globalisation from above and treason from within is unable to provide a liveable environment and a promising future to its national subjects – also because the world can never be kept outside the national borders. Life outside the nation augurs disembarassment and comparatively boundless opportunities to the would-be migrants. Managing one's escape from Eritrea leads inevitably towards disappointment, however. While their plight and their motivation to flee are officially acknowledged, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the neighbouring countries confine and restrict Eritrean refugees instead of offering access to alternative and self-determined lives, freed from fear and heteronomy – as somehow hoped for by the migrants. Thus, these people instead come to rely on the Eritrean tradition of self-reliance with restricted means at hand, this time in order to advance their individual lives and migration attempts in a global frame.

Moges has been twice cut off from the rest of the world. During his imprisonment his e-mail account had expired due to non-use, erasing his numerous contacts with friends and former colleagues now dispersed all over the world. Given that one of them might be able to offer a job and enable a new beginning for him and his family, Moges was searching Facebook for familiar names and faces when we last met, eager to re-establish the contacts and bonds he once had. Impressed by the globalisation's potential, he sighed, “where would we be without all that technology?”

¹⁵ “Self-reliance” was a key concept within the EPLF's political programme and ideological identity, used to win the struggle against Ethiopia's Derg regime as well as to develop liberated areas and subsequently the independent nation. While the EPLF and other liberation movements in the global South referred to such various mentors as Julius Nyerere, Antonio Gramsci, and Mao Tse Tung in the 1970s and 1980s, these references have become meaningless for today's young generation.

CHAPTER SEVEN

PRE- AND POST-MIGRATION PATTERNS OF VICTIMISATION AMONG ERITREAN REFUGEES IN THE NETHERLANDS

Daniel R Mekonnen

*“If there is any place called hell in the world, it should be in Libya.”
An Eritrean refugee recounting his experience of the journey in the Sahara Desert, a place
where secondary victimisation occurs most frequently.*

Abstract

Forced migration is one of the major indicators of human insecurity. Throughout its history, Eritrea has seen a recurring cycle of mass political violence and contagious regional armed conflicts. As a result, Eritrea is one of the leading refugee-producing countries in the world. After independence in 1991 Eritrea experienced a major decline in the mass exodus of its population. The trend has completely changed in the aftermath of the 1998–2000 Eritrea-Ethiopia border conflict, and particularly after 2001 when Eritrea became one of the most repressive regimes in the world. By examining forced migration as one of the major indicators of human insecurity, this paper discusses pre- and post-migration patterns of victimisation among Eritrean refugees in the Netherlands and in so doing the paper analyses the challenge from a victimological and human security perspective. The study is based on narratives of victimisation told by Eritrean refugees in the Netherlands. The data, obtained between April and October 2010, is gathered by open-ended narrative interviews with a number of Eritrean refugees in the Netherlands, a majority of whom have arrived in the country after 2002.

Key terms: *forced migration, victimisation, victimology, human security, human rights, trauma*

7.1. Introduction

Eritrean history is marked by a recurring cycle of political violence and contagious regional armed conflicts. This has made the country one of the major spots of mass victimisation. Eritrea is also one of the leading refugee producing countries in the world. The trend was halted for a brief moment after the country’s independence in 1991. However, with the advent of a full-fledged authoritarianism in 2001, which is preceded by the 1998–2000 border conflict with Ethiopia, forced migration has again become one of the distinctive trademarks of

Eritrea. Given this sad reality, the designation of the Eritrean population by Gaim Kibreab as a society severely inflicted by a “powerful obsession to migrate”¹ should come as no surprise. This is further epitomised by the metaphoric observation of Nathaniel Meyers who travelled to Eritrea in mid-2010 and observed that *Prison Break*² was the television series most Eritreans wanted to watch.³ Beneath this penetrating metaphor is the tragedy of Eritrea becoming an open giant prison where every member of the population consider themselves prisoners and relatives outside of the country are deemed rescuers. Similarly, Tania Müller also notes that as a result of the unbearable situation in the country, Eritrea’s brightest minds “spend their mind devising strategies how to best leave the country.”⁴ In a broader African context, this resonates with the observation of Yash Tandon, who holds, “The most shocking aspect of Africa today is the exodus of its people.”⁵ This reality is harsher in Eritrea than in many other African countries.

In 2008, Eritrea was the second highest refugee-producing country in the world in absolute numbers.⁶ Despite its small population size, the figures are exceedingly fear-provoking. On the other hand, the Netherlands is one of the major recipients of refugees in Europe. In 2009, nearly 15 000 new asylum applications were filed in the Netherlands.⁷ These include a considerable number of applications by newly arriving Eritrean asylum seekers.⁸ According to experts, the 2009 statistics portray an increase of eleven per cent in the total number of

¹ Gaim Kibreab, “The Eritrean Diaspora, the War of Independence, Post-Conflict (Re)-construction and Democratisation” in *The Role of Diasporas in Peace, Democracy and Development in the Horn of Africa*, ed. Ulf Johansson Dahre (Lund: Lund University, 2007), 99.

² This is a prominent American television serial drama on the story of a man who was wrongly sentenced to death, and the effort of a brother to help the prisoner escape prison.

³ Nathaniel Meyers, “Africa’s North Korea: Inside Eritrea’s Open-Air Prison,” *Foreign Policy*, July/August 2010, also available at http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2010/06/21/africas_north_korea?page=0,0.

⁴ Tania R Müller, “Bare Life and the Developmental State: Implications of the Militarisation of Higher Education in Eritrea,” *Journal of Modern African Studies* 46, no. 1 (2008): 131.

⁵ Yash Tandon, “Questions for Our Nordic Friends,” in *Africa in Uncertain Times*, (Uppsala: Nordic Africa Institute, Annual Report, 2009), 13.

⁶ UNHCR *Global Trends: Refugees, Asylum Seekers, Returnees, Internally Displaced and Stateless Persons*, (2009) 16. UNHCR 2009.

⁷ Arno Sprangers and Han Nicolaas “Stijging aantal asielzoekers in Nederland iets groter dan in EU (Number of Asylum Seekers in the Netherlands Increases Slightly Higher than in EU),” available at <http://www.cbs.nl/NR/rdonlyres/C24A6C4E-FCCC-4951-994B-3BB73EB391DF/0/2010k2b15p25art.pdf> (accessed 1 September 2010).

⁸ In this work, the term refugee is used in the context of both asylum seekers and refugees. However, in a strict terminological sense, an asylum seeker is a person who has applied for protection as a refugee and whose application is still pending; while a refugee is a person whose application has been granted.

asylum seekers in the Netherlands, compared to that of 2008.⁹ Understandably, migration is one of the major pre-occupations to policy makers in the Netherlands as is the case in other parts of the European Union (EU).¹⁰ On the other hand, the alarming level of mass exodus from Eritrea is one of the main indicators of human insecurity in Eritrea in particular, and in the Horn of Africa in general. As a result, Eritrea, as one of the leading refugee-producing countries and the Netherlands, as one of the major recipient countries, make a good combination for an exploratory study which analyses pre- and post-migration patterns of victimisation among Eritrean refugees – which is the main objective of this paper.

7.2. Narratives of victimisation by Eritrean refugees

As noted before, the Netherlands is one of the main destinations of Eritrean refugees in Europe. Compared to other European countries, the number of Eritrean refugees in the Netherlands is relatively low. However, the number is predicted to grow steadily as long as the major causes of forced migration remain unresolved. The fact that the Netherlands is favourably approving¹¹ a very high number of asylum applications from newly arriving Eritrean refugees is another reason to predict a considerable increase in the near future. According to data obtained from the Netherlands Immigration and Naturalisation Service, in 2009 there were 486 new asylum applications by Eritreans.¹² Compared to 2008, when there were 252 applications from Eritreans, the figures from 2009 have almost doubled, indicating the growing number of Eritrean refugees in the country.

⁹ Sprangers and Nicolaas, *Stijging aantal*.

¹⁰ See for example, Anna Kicinger “International Migration as a Non-Traditional Security Threat and the EU Responses to this Phenomenon,” CEFMR Working Paper, October 2004, available at http://www.cefmr.pan.pl/docs/cefmr_wp_2004-02.pdf; Michela Ceccorulli “Migration as a Security Threat: Internal and External Dynamics in the European Union,” GARNET Working Paper No. 65/09, April 2009, available at http://www.garnet-eu.org/fileadmin/documents/working_papers/6509.pdf.

¹¹ This has been relayed to the author by Mr. Carel Sonneveldt, an asylum screening officer at the Schiphol Asylum Application Centre, in an interview with the author on 12 October 2010. Mr. Sonneveldt particularly states that an Eritrean asylum seeker who cites one of the following major grounds of victimization has a very high probability of acceptance: religious persecution, prolonged military conscription and the state of “illegality” created by crossing the Eritrean borders without proper documentation. It should be noted that most people are forced to cross the border “illegally” due to the impossibility of obtaining exist visa and passport from government authorities.

¹² Data obtained on 24 August 2010 from Mr. Stefan de Boer, Deputy Head of the Information and Analysis Centre at the Netherlands Immigration and Naturalisation Service.

The fact of Eritrea becoming again a centre of victimisation and an unprecedented scale of mass exodus is troubling. Combined with other factors, this poses a serious threat both to the very existence of the country and to human security in the region, as also stressed by a 2010 report of the ICG.¹³ This claim can be supported by the following narrations of Eritrean refugees. The data also reveal the extent to which the Eritrean population in general and the youth in particular are affected by the challenge and how they are escaping from it. The narratives epitomise thousands of other untold stories of Eritrean refugees in different parts of the world. Nonetheless, by no means do these narratives purport to be representative of all accounts of Eritrean refugees. They are meant only to reflect the general pattern of victimisation described by many Eritrean refugees in different parts of the world.

The information presented in the following stories is gathered by open-ended narrative interviews with twelve Eritrean refugees, a majority of whom have arrived in the Netherlands after 2002. The year 2002 is chosen as an important milestone for the following reason. This year represents a time when the mass exodus of Eritreans has taken a new shape. This is so because of the widespread political clampdown that took place in Eritrea in the preceding year, when members of the G-15,¹⁴ journalists of the private media and others were arbitrarily arrested by the Eritrean government. Preceded by the 1998–2000 border conflict with Ethiopia, this period denotes the opening of a new episode in the post-independence history of Eritrea, a time when a full-fledged authoritarianism took deep roots in the country. Since then the mass exodus of Eritreans has continued unabated. The second most important factor, as noted by Kibreab, is that in the year 2002, the Eritrean government promulgated the Warsay Yikealo Development Campaign (WYDC), which made the requirement of national service programme indefinite.¹⁵ In real sense, this means the introduction of a lifelong military conscription that has degenerated to a form of forced labour, a practice the prohibition of which has now become a peremptory norm of international law (a norm from which no

¹³ International Crisis Group (ICG) *Eritrea: The Siege State*, Africa Report No. 163, 21 September 2010.

¹⁴ G-15 stands for the Group of 15 senior government officials who initiated a reform movement in 2001 and remain in detention without trial since then. Some of them have reportedly died while in detention.

¹⁵ At the start of the programme, military service was only a sub-element of national service. With it time, military service has become a major component of it. Given the indefinite nature of the conscription, in this work, the programme will be referred to as National Military Service Programme (NMSP).

derogation is ever permitted). The apparent consequence of this is mass exodus of an unprecedented scale.¹⁶

The interviews with Eritrean refugees were conducted between April and October 2010. Due to time constraints and higher levels of apathy in Eritrean diaspora communities, solicitation of interviews with a larger number of refugees was not possible. The data gathered from the interviews is therefore supplemented by the following additional information: a) interview with an asylum screening officer from the Netherlands Immigration and Naturalisation Service; b) interview with admissions manager at the Central Brabant Newcomers and Refugees Foundation, an NGO that supports refugees; c) person-to-person conversations with a number of key Eritrean informants, who are well informed about the dynamics of forced migration in Eritrea; d) focus group discussions with a number of Eritreans residing in the Netherlands; e) personal observations of the researcher over extended period of time on the plight of Eritrean refugees and the overall human rights crisis in Eritrea; f) reports of international publicists and human rights advocacy groups.

The apparent limitation of the research in terms of soliciting a bigger number of volunteer interviewees requires a little more explanation. At the beginning of the research, a call for interviews was widely publicised in prominent Eritrean diaspora websites, news outlets and paltalk mediums.¹⁷ Even then, the turnover was not sufficient. This is mainly due to the pervasive level of political apathy in Eritrean diaspora communities and also due to widespread fear of reprisal¹⁸ on the part of many refugees, as will be discussed in some of the case studies below. The majority of the interviewees were therefore contacted via acquaintances and social networks of Eritreans in the Netherlands. This strengthens the requirement of strict anonymity and confidentiality, a factor which is also highlighted by other researchers who have conducted similar interviews with Eritreans. Following the

¹⁶ Gaim Kibreab, "Forced Labour in Eritrea," *Journal of Modern African Studies* 47, no 1 (2009): 4, 49.

¹⁷ The call was posted on the website of www.awate.com and www.togoruba.com, two of the widely read Eritrean diaspora websites. It was also announced in the *Voice of Meselna Delina*, an Eritrean radio programme broadcasted from South Africa. This is in addition to dissemination of the information in the *Hidmo Meneseyat Eritrea Discussion Forum* at paltalk. In recent years, paltalk has become one of the most effective social and political forums of Eritrean diaspora communities. Efforts to broadcast the call for interview at *Radio Erena*, another Eritrean radio programme broadcasted from Paris, were not successful.

¹⁸ One person approached by an acquaintance of the author has, for example, particularly cited fear of reprisal as a main reason for his refusal to be interviewed.

approach adopted by Hirt,¹⁹ Kibreab,²⁰ Müller²¹ and Arnone²² the names of all Eritrean interviewees have been anonymised and specific characteristic features of the interviewees have also been disguised to protect the identity of interviewees. Religious affiliation and gender of interviewees have been left intact. All of the interviewees are individuals whose application for asylum is already accepted. This reduces the risk of over-exaggerating one's own plight on the part of the interviewees with the motive of enhancing the acceptability of asylum application.²³ In one instance, data was collected from a person who has been granted asylum in another European country but happened to be in the Netherlands at the time of the interview.

Most of the interviewees characteristically display multiple incidents or levels of victimisation as a result of exposure to multiple traumatic events that took place in multiple contexts.²⁴ The first level of victimisation occurs within Eritrea. This type of victimisation often results from a prolonged stay in the military, and the resultant abuses or other types of human rights violations. The second level of victimisation takes place once the victims flee the country. The starting point for this is most of the time arrival in the immediate neighbouring countries, such as Ethiopia and Sudan. This continues to other "corridor countries," such as Libya, and to a certain extent also Italy and Malta. The most notorious places where most interviewees suffer from a second level of victimisation are Sudan and Libya. The third level of victimisation is that which takes place after arrival in the final destination, which is the Netherlands.

¹⁹ Nicole Hirt and Abdulkader Saleh Mohammad, "'Dreams Don't Come True in Eritrea': Anomie and Family Disintegration due to the Structural Militarization of Society," *Journal of Modern African Studies* 51, no 1 (2013): 139-168; Robert K Merton, *Social Theory and Social Structure* (New York: The Free Press, 1995), 15.

²⁰ Kibreab 2009, *Forced Labour*, footnote 15.

²¹ Müller, *Bare Life*, footnote 14.

²² Anna Arnone, "Journeys to Exile: The Constitution of Eritrean Identity through Narratives and Experiences," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 34, no. 2 (2008): 329.

²³ This is based on the cautionary note of Kibreab, *Forced Labour*, 50.

²⁴ This characterization is based on Tim Hope *et al*, "The Phenomena of Multiple Victimization: The Relationship between Personal and Property Crime Risk," *British Journal of Criminology* 41, (2001): 595-617. This paper focuses on what the authors define as "multiple crime-type victimization (MCV)," a concept which denotes the extent to which persons are victimized by more than one type of offence over a given period.

7.2.1. Primary victimisation

As a country ruled by one of the most repressive regimes in the world, Eritrea is replete with all major sources of victimisation. The most common cause of victimisation is prolonged military conscription. The Eritrean government adopted a national military service programme (NMSP) in 1991 which was fully implemented as from 1994. Accordingly, every adult member of the Eritrean society between eighteen and forty-five years of age is required to fulfil an eighteen-month NMSP. The programme is composed of a six-month military training and a one-year voluntary service, rendered mostly in the army. In the first few years, the Eritrean government has shown some degree of respect to the maximum limit of eighteen months. However, after the 1998–2000 border conflict with Ethiopia, the government has utterly undermined the eighteen months limit and kept hundreds of thousands of conscripts in the army under indefinite military conscription, and with a nominal pocket money which in real sense is meaningless in terms of improving the lives of the soldiers or that of their family members. Hundreds of thousands of Eritrean youth have been trapped in this quagmire for several years, some of them for more than fifteen years, and they still do not see any end to this abusive practice. Military discipline is extremely harsh and in many instances army commanders employ excessively abhorrent punishments such as torture and extra-judicial killings. Frustrated by such abusive practices, tens of thousands of Eritreans are fleeing the country in unprecedented manner and this makes one of the most common causes of victimisation described by the interviewees. Semere, a twenty-nine-year old interviewee, shares his experience as follows:

I was conscripted to the army in May 2000. After taking my military training in the Gahtelay Training Centre, I was assigned to the 32nd Division, which by then was stationed in a place called Keskesse. When I arrived in this place, I met some people who have been in the army since 1994 and whose most productive age was being wasted in a gruesome military life. I immediately began to think about my future, contemplating that I may also have to stay in the army for the same number of years as those colleagues or even more. That was unbearable. I could not really see a bright future of my life. I was then to witness a dreadful experience which involved a brutal punishment of some female members of the army. The ladies were punished for returning a week after their official leave but the punishment was harsh. As I saw them, their hands were tied up from behind, their heads shaved, and milk spilt over their body.²⁵ This sounded quite “normal” to those

²⁵ This type of punishment is very common in the army. Milk is spilt over the body of a tied up prisoner to attract flea on the body of the victim and make the punishment degrading. For sexual violence in the army, see

who were in the army longer than myself but for me it was dreadful. I saw several other brutal methods of punishment at other times and I finally decided to leave the army, to go anywhere before it was too late, and search for a better life, rights and dignity. Accordingly, I left Eritrea in October 2000 and arrived in the Netherlands at the end of 2002.²⁶

The story of Semere resonates with that of Desta who describes the main reason for his decision to leave Eritrea as “a prolonged practice of military conscription,” a practice which has made his personal aspirations unrealisable and his future unpromising.²⁷ Desta, who has spent twelve years in the army, narrates a personal experience which involves a brute method of punishment meted out against him on the instruction of a senior military officer who had an axe to grind against him. Accordingly, with his hands tied up from behind, he was made to spend fifteen days in the open air, day and night. He was untied only for few minutes a day when he had to eat and urinate. During this time, he was given only a small piece of bread and water as a meal three times a day. The punishment was meted out in a place called Mai Idaga. It was in the coldest season of the year in the Eritrean highland. At this time of the year, Mai Idaga is one of the coldest places in Eritrea.²⁸ This type of punishment is also reported, for example, by some former conscripts interviewed by Kibreab who told the latter that even refusal to provide personal service to superiors (such as washing clothes, socks or cooking) is subject to this kind of punishment.²⁹

In most cases, primary incident of victimisation suffered by interviewees was gauged by the answer they gave to one of the first questions in the interview, which asks, “Why did you leave Eritrea?” Hagos answers the question as follows:

After the end of the border conflict with Ethiopia, I began to understand things clearly. That is when the exploitation by superiors was taking a different shape. Soldiers were

generally Cecilia M Bailliet, “Examining Sexual Violence in the Military within the Context of Eritrean Asylum Claims Presented in Norway,” *International Journal of Refugee Law* 19, (2007): 471–510.

²⁶ Interview with Semere, 2 August 2010.

²⁷ Hirt and Mohammad, *Dreams Don’t Come True* (131–132, 163), characterises this as “social anomie,” a state of large scale disturbed order and societal disintegration as a result of the inability of a large proportion of the society to realize one’s personal aspirations. Hepner and O’Kane on their part investigate the challenge by adopting the concept of biopolitics, which they define as “a state-led deployment of disciplinary technologies on individuals and population groups.” Tricia Redeker Hepner and David O’Kane, “Introduction: Biopolitics, Militarism and Development in Contemporary Eritrea,” in *Biopolitics, Militarism and Development: Eritrea in the Twenty-First Century*, ed. David O’Kane and Tricia Redeker Hepner (London: Berghan Books, 2009), xxxiii–xxxiv.

²⁸ Interview with Desta, 16 October 2010.

²⁹ Kibreab, *Forced Labour*, 58.

forced to cultivate horticultures owned by superiors at no benefit to the soldiers themselves. They were also forced to build houses for their superiors. It was sheer exploitation. I was once asked to build a house for my superior but I refused. I even insisted that if one has to build houses, it should be for the internally displaced persons who are living in make-shift camps and not for the superiors who are in a much better position than others. My superiors did not like my principled position on this issue and I was intimidated seriously by reason of which I finally decided to leave the country.³⁰

A fourth example comes from the testimony of Mehari who has been victimised by illegal detention of thirteen months in one of the most notorious prison centres, called Shadshay Brigade (the Sixth Brigade). Mehari was jailed for returning to his unit later than the last day of his official leave. According to Mehari, the reason for his delay was an injury he sustained while on leave and he had proper documentation on this. In spite of this, the commander of his division gave a unilateral order the effect of which was indefinite imprisonment. He describes the living condition of the prison as extremely harsh. One day, a number of prisoners escaped while they were escorted by prison guards for urination. The guards retaliated by beating all prisoners, including those who did not try to escape. Mehari was recovering from the injury he sustained while on official leave. Apparently, he was one of those who did not try to escape. Nonetheless, he was beaten seriously by the prison guards who over-reacted to the adventurous measure of the absconders. Mehari sustained serious injury as a result of the beating and fainted. He was then rushed to a military clinic and spent there a few days from which he escaped to Sudan in 2007. He arrived in the Netherlands in January 2009.³¹

The last example in this section comes from Gile, who is a former freedom fighter of EPLF, the predecessor of PFDJ, the sole legal political party in Eritrea. He arrived in the Netherlands by the end of 2003. He first fled to Sudan, then crossed the Sahara Desert and the Mediterranean Sea before his arrival in Italy and finally in the Netherlands. He left Eritrea after he was illegally detained while in the army. He suffered the illegal detention for expressing a view unfavourable to his superiors. He expressed the view in a meeting held in the awake of the reform movement of the G-15. The meeting was convened by a senior ruling party official who urged attendants of the meeting to condemn the reformers. Gile objected

³⁰ Interview with Hagos, 2 July 2010. For similar accounts, see Kibreab, *Forced Labour*, 60–63, citing a former conscript.

³¹ Interview with Mehari, 22 August 2010.

the call for condemnation and expressed his concern on the ground that it would be unfair to condemn the G-15 in their absence and based only on one side of the story. He was arbitrarily detained on such grounds. Fortunately, his imprisonment did not last long. The commander of his division decided to shorten the period of the illegal detention, because as a trainer of a specialised course, Gile was indispensable in his division. After his release from detention, Gile knew he was no longer safe in the army and decided to leave the country.³² The plight of Gile resonates with a story narrated to Kibreab by a former Eritrean conscript, who says those who expose the failures of the military leadership or challenge the commanders are subject to harsh punishment, including extra-judicial killing.³³

7.2.2. Secondary victimisation

Secondary incident of victimisation takes place when victims cross the Eritrean border and reach one of the neighbouring countries, notably Ethiopia and Sudan. This experience continues in all transit countries until one reaches the Netherlands. The causes of victimisation at this level include natural and man-made tragedies. Sometimes, the incident giving rise to victimisation may take place in the border between Eritrea and the neighbouring countries. A typical example of victimisation which combines both natural and man-made tragedies is described in the following story of Hagos, a 41-year old refugee:

I left the border village of Ali Gidir at 7pm and travelled for several hours until I was confronted by a herd of about 150 cows. I have heard rumours that the cows in the Gash-Barka Region are very wild to strangers and I was too scared when surrounded by such a big herd. I tactfully avoided what could have been a certain deadly attack by the herd and continued my way to Sudan. However, the experience was traumatic. Around 2am of the same night, I lost my direction and ended up approaching the border guards. I saw a guard in a distance of 100 meters and quickly hid myself behind a tree. However, a number of soldiers came closer to the tree to capture me. I made some strange sound by colliding a stone and a small piece of metal I have been travelling with. I did this to disguise a typical machinegun sound heard when the device is being loaded and miraculously the trick has worked. I heard the soldiers saying, "He is a jihadist, ignore him, and let us go before he shoots." And they went back immediately. I then continued my journey, at times confronting some wild animals in the midst of the wilderness. Around 7am the next morning, I crossed the Tekeze River and arrived in a small border village of Sudan.³⁴

³² Interview with Gile, 4 September 2010.

³³ Kibreab, *Forced Labour*, 58.

³⁴ Interview with Hagos, 2 July 2010.

The experience of Hagos is one of a few exceptions, because most Eritreans cross the border to Ethiopia and Sudan with the help of smugglers who are perceived of having discreet deals with senior military officers in the border surveillance unit. Without such deals it is extremely difficult to smuggle people from Eritrea to neighbouring countries, because the Eritrean borders are heavily guarded by the border surveillance unit which operates on a strict “shoot-to-kill” policy. Ali, for example, travelled to Sudan with the help of smugglers, who charged him exorbitant price in exchange for the risky service they provided. He describes his journey to Sudan as one which involved a chain of smugglers who ended up fighting against each other on the amount of money each of them should receive from the “clients.” Ali was forced to leave the country “illegally” when he was refused an exit visa to pursue postgraduate studies after he secured a scholarship in the Netherlands. It is a matter of routine practice that individuals within the age of military conscription, 18 and 45 years of age, are not allowed to leave the country even for academic purposes. In rare instances, individuals may obtain permission to travel abroad and this normally happens on the basis of preferential treatment and loyalty to the ruling party, PFDJ.

The option Ali had was to leave the country with the help of smugglers. The experience was life threatening. As a result of the disagreement between the smugglers, Ali and nine other individuals were held hostage for ten days in a Sudanese border village. One of the smugglers, who believed that he was underpaid by his counterparts, held them hostage until such time when he would settle the outstanding money with his counterparts. Ali’s proficiency in Arabic meant that he overheard what was supposed to be a confidential phone conversation between the man who kept him hostage and another smuggler who was talking from the other end of the phone. Ali was extremely traumatised to hear the hostage taker threatening the other man that unless the outstanding balance is settled, he would starve the hostages to death ensuring that they would not make it to their final destination which was Khartoum, the capital of Sudan. The victims were locked in a small room with only a brief break every evening. They were severely impoverished as a result of a shortage of food deliberately imposed on them by the hostage taker. The person provided them with a small quantity of bread which is sufficient only for bare survival. Ali recounts that “for the hostage taker, the victims were nothing more than valuable merchandises that should be kept only as long as the hostage taker settles his

disagreement with the other smugglers.” Fortunately, recalls Ali, the smugglers resolved their problem after ten days and the victims were released right away.³⁵

From all transit countries, where a secondary level of victimisation takes place, Libya stands out as the most notorious. Most Eritrean refugees have dreadful memories about their experience in Libya. Six of the interviewees in this research made their way to Europe via Libya. After entering Sudan, most refugees continue to Libya. The travel from Sudan to Libya is extremely hazardous. The border between Sudan and Libya is entirely part of the Sahara Desert, the world’s largest hot desert, and this is the only way people are smuggled from Sudan to Libya. If one crosses the Sahara Desert and reaches Libya alive, it is considered a miracle. The next step is crossing the Mediterranean Sea to reach the southern tip of Italy, which is the first European point of entry for many Eritreans. The suffering Eritreans endure in crossing the Sahara Desert and the Mediterranean Sea is comparable only with paranormal stories told by best seller novels or by Hollywood adventure movies. The corresponding level of trauma and psychological harm is difficult to imagine. The following examples illustrate this.

From Sudan to Libya people are transported by overcrowded vehicles. Most of the vehicles used in this trip are four-wheel-drive Toyota Land Cruisers. Normally, these vehicles may carry a maximum of seven or eight people. However, the smugglers sometimes transport about forty people at a time in these vehicles.³⁶ Depending on the condition of vehicles and other factors, such as the astuteness of the smugglers in terms of driving in the right direction, the journey may take a minimum of eight days. In his journey from Sudan to Libya, Ande crossed the Sahara Desert in 2008 aboard an overcrowded Toyota Land Cruiser. In his case, the journey lasted for a total of twenty-one days. On their way, they were intercepted by Darfur rebel groups who extorted US\$ 30 from each person at a gun point.³⁷ Another victim, Haile, crossed the Sahara Desert in March 2003, with other twenty-seven refugees in another overcrowded Toyota Land Cruiser. In the middle of their journey, the driver of the vehicle, who is also the smuggler, told the refugees that he would divert to a nearby spot to fetch a

³⁵ Interview with Ali, 22 August 2010.

³⁶ Interview with Hagos, 2 July 2010.

³⁷ Interview with Ande, 22 August 2010.

spare part and while doing so he ordered them to stay in the same place where he was about to leave them. Strangely, however, he asked the three female members of the group to accompany him. According to Haile, this was a pretext to isolate the women from the rest of the group and create conducive atmosphere for rape. Cognizant of the dodgy schemes of the smuggler, the refugees resisted in one voice and saved the women from a possible rape. The smuggler continued the journey without further ado. However, after a short while he was unable to drive the vehicle due to excessive intake of recreational drug. The victims had to wait for hours until the driver regained his consciousness and was able to drive.³⁸

One of the most traumatic incidents described by another interviewee is the death of some sixty-five refugees in the middle of the Sahara Desert.³⁹ The travellers were trapped in the desert as a result of technical malfunction of the vehicle which was transporting them. All sixty-five people perished in the same spot as a result of exposure to prolonged hunger and dehydration. A number of corpses were traced a few hundred metres away from the place where the vehicle was trapped. It appeared that some of the victims tried to continue the journey on foot after the vehicle was trapped but they were unable to move more than a few hundred metres. It was not clear if these victims were Eritreans, because the Sahara Desert is also crossed by other African immigrants. A similar account is, however, given by Mehari, who says, “In our case, we buried four Eritreans and twelve Somalis in the Sahara Desert.” Recounting his experience in Libya, Mehari says, “If there is any place called hell in the world, it should be in Libya.”⁴⁰ As told by all interviewees who passed through the Sahara Desert, their vulnerability in Libya was exacerbated by the fact that there are many local people in Libya who have made it their “profession” to extort money from refugees. They do this with excessive brutality and violence. Libya is a transit country to many African refugees who aspire to enter Europe via the Mediterranean Sea. This has created not only a wide network of smugglers operating from Libya but also gave rise to the emergence of a large number of people who are actively involved in the business of extorting money from refugees, a practice which is accompanied by brute physical violence, such as stabbing and beating.

³⁸ Interview with Haile, 24 July 2010.

³⁹ Interview with Desta, 16 October 2010.

⁴⁰ Interview with Mehari, 22 August 2010.

The longer one stays in Libya the more they are vulnerable to repeated actions of extortion. As a result, most people rush to cross the Mediterranean Sea even when there are strong waves in the sea, making it extremely difficult for navigation with the small boats of smugglers. Travel in the sea has its own ordeals. Solomon crossed the Mediterranean Sea in July 2003. In the middle of their journey, his group lost direction and stayed in the sea for six days. They were luckily rescued by a passing Tunis ship. With hindsight, he describes his experience as an insanely outrageous. He still does not know how he survived the ordeal.⁴¹ Similarly, after losing their direction in the middle of the sea, Hagos and his group were rescued by a Spanish ship which offered them a sanctuary in the sea for eight days after which they were taken to Malta.⁴²

From the above it is clear that by the time they arrive in the Netherlands, Eritrean refugees have already sustained immense psychological harm and trauma. There is a general consensus among researchers that refugees are some of the most susceptible group of people to post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). This is due to the fact that their experience is bound to expose them to poly-traumatic events that occur in multiple contexts overtime.⁴³ As a result, they require tailor-made psychological support mechanisms that should facilitate speedy recovery and healing. Several of the interviewees have agreed on the need for such support mechanisms but lamented on the fact that these services are not adequately available. This resonates with the observation of Hanneke Ermstrang, who is the Admissions Manager at the Central Brabant Newcomers and Refugees Foundation, an NGO that supports refugees and asylum seekers.⁴⁴

Ermstrang holds that refugees undergo a medical check-up before they are formally interviewed by the Netherlands Immigration and Naturalisation Service. The medical check-up is meant to find out, among other things, whether individuals are physically and mentally

⁴¹ Interview with Solomon, 2 August 2010.

⁴² Interview with Hagos, 2 July 2010.

⁴³ Michael Hollifield *et al*, "Measuring Trauma and Health Status in Refugees: A Critical Review," *Journal of the American Medical Association* 288, no. 5 (2002): 618; Annette A. M. Gerritsen *et al*, "Physical and Mental Health of Afghan, Iranian and Somali Asylum Seekers and Refugees Living in the Netherlands," *Social Psychiatry and Psychiatric Epidemiology* 41, no. 1 (2005): 18-26; Derrick Silove *et al*, "Anxiety, Depression and PTSD in Asylum Seekers: Associations with Pre-Migration Trauma and Post-Migration Stressors," *British Journal of Psychiatry* 170, (1997): 351-357.

⁴⁴ Interview with Hanneke Ermstrang, 8 September 2010.

fit for a formal interview. In terms of assessing the mental fitness of refugees and most importantly in terms of gauging trauma and psychological problems, Ermstrang believes that the mechanisms employed by the immigration department are not sufficient. She particularly questions the competence of the medical experts who conduct the examination, for they are nurses and not properly trained professionals such as psychologists. In elaborating this, Ermstrang mentions a case of a refugee from Benin whom she believed was extremely traumatised and unable to stand for a formal interview. After being asked some fifteen or twenty standard questions by a nurse, which is the current regular mechanism utilised to gauge trauma and psychological harm among refugees, the person from Benin was said to be competent to do a formal interview. This is indicative of the need to critically assess whether the current psychological support mechanisms available for refugees are commensurate with the needs of victims of gross human rights violations. In this regard, it is important to heed the advice of Louis Loutan et al who suggest as follows. In the case of refugees, the mechanisms adopted to assess psychological trauma, such as the standard questionnaires used by psychologists, need to be culture-specific in order to ensure better results.⁴⁵

7.2.3. Tertiary victimisation

Tertiary level of victimisation is that which occurs when the refugees arrive in the Netherlands. For many people, arrival in the Netherlands heralds the dawn of a new era, the end of an arduous journey and the beginning of a dignified life. However, in some cases, it does not necessarily mark a break with the enduring cycle of victimisation. The challenges some Eritreans face in the Netherlands are by no means comparable to the hardship they undergo in Eritrea and the transit countries they cross before they arrive in the Netherlands, particularly Sudan and Libya. There are, however, some troubling incidents of suffering even after the arrival of refugees in safe havens, such as the Netherlands. This is best explained in the context of what Müller describes as a remarkable level of control the Eritrean government enjoys over its diaspora communities.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Louis Loutan *et al*, "Impact of Trauma and Torture on Asylum Seekers," *European Journal of Public Health* 9, no. 2 (1999): 93-96.

⁴⁶ Müller, *Bare Life*, 125.

In proportion to its small population, Eritrea has one of the largest diaspora communities in the world. The total population of Eritrea is estimated at four million.⁴⁷ Anecdotal evidence suggests that there are currently about 1.5 million Eritreans scattered throughout the world, stretching from Africa, to the Middle East, to Europe, to North America and to Australia. The Eritrean government enjoys extraordinary control over diaspora communities which is no less effective than the control it enjoys over the population inside the country. One of the most effective methods by which the Eritrean government enforces its control over diaspora communities is the imposition of a 2% income tax from every Eritrean who lives anywhere in the world.⁴⁸ This tax regime was promulgated by Proclamation No. 67/1995, officially titled, *Proclamation to Provide for the Collection of Tax from Eritreans who Live Abroad and Earn an Income*.

As noted by Kibreab, Eritrea is one of the few countries in the world that levy income tax on their diaspora communities. Eritreans are required to pay the diaspora tax regardless of whether they have adopted foreign citizenship. Most importantly, individuals have to fulfil this onerous obligation in disregard of the fact that the income from which this tax is collected is already taxed in the source country. This raises critical questions on the legality of the practice, which in effect is a practice of double taxation.⁴⁹ In addition to being a major source of revenue to the Eritrean government, the 2% tax regime is used as an effective control mechanism over diaspora communities. Accordingly, “all government services, including those which are supposed to be intrinsic to citizenship rights are dependent on payment of the 2% diaspora tax.” These include a number of services such as: obtaining or renewing an Eritrean passport and other documents such as birth, marriage and death certificates; buying, selling, inheriting and transferring property; traveling to Eritrea, and other similar services.⁵⁰ Experience shows that the diaspora tax is also collected even from refugees who do not have a formal salary in which case the “tax” is collected from social welfare benefits. In addition to

⁴⁷ Since independence in 1991, no official census has been conducted in Eritrea. Surveys are conducted in the country by different actors and the estimation of Eritrea’s total population is based on such surveys. Arnone, however, writes: “The Eritrean diaspora accounts for one quarter of the entire Eritrean population: 1 million Eritreans live abroad, only 3 million in Eritrea.” Arnone, *Journeys to Exile*, 325, citing Khalid Koser, *New African Diasporas* (London: Routledge, 2003).

⁴⁸ Müller, *Bare Life*, 125; Kibreab, *The Eritrean Diaspora*, 106.

⁴⁹ Kibreab, *The Eritrean Diaspora*, 106.

⁵⁰ Kibreab 2006, *The Eritrean Diaspora*, 106–107.

the payment of the diaspora tax, individuals who are believed to have left Eritrea “illegally” are forced to sign a self-incriminating statement of treason. As a case study which features the above two elements, the experience of Haile is most illustrative.

Haile arrived in the Netherlands at the end of 2003. He left Eritrea after he was tipped by friends that the government was to arrest him in retaliation for his support to the reform movement of the G-15. Like most refugees, he first crossed to Sudan, then to Libya, then to Italy, finally arriving in the Netherlands. After obtaining his asylum protection from the Netherlands, he applied for family reunification and this was accepted by the Netherlands. His wife and children are still in Eritrea. It is difficult to bring them without obtaining the relevant documentation, such as birth and marriage certificates, from the Eritrean authorities. In order to obtain the relevant documentation, Haile had to report to the Eritrean Embassy in the Netherlands, where he was asked first to sign a self-incriminating statement “for betraying his country.” He was also asked to pay the 2% diaspora tax. By then, he was not working and did not earn any income. He was however told to pay the 2% tax from his social welfare benefits, which is considered by the embassy as an “income.” He fulfilled both requirements, hoping that he would get the required clearance from the embassy without which his wife and children would not get the documents they require from the Eritrean authorities back in the home country. However, in a sudden twist of events, his wife was asked to bring a letter from the Eritrean Embassy in the Netherlands, confirming the loyalty of her husband to the government. This document was never to be obtained from the embassy, because Haile is “a designated disloyal,” even after paying the 2% income tax and signing the self-incriminating statement.⁵¹

Another characteristic feature of Eritrean diaspora communities is that they are deeply infiltrated by government informers and spies who report on the activities of others in a systematic and orchestrated manner. Some individuals even go to the extent of intimidating dissidents, as has happened to Gile in 2010. Gile is an outspoken critic of the Eritrean government, who has left the country in 2002 after he was briefly jailed for expressing his views which were not agreeable to his superiors while he was in the army. After his arrival in

⁵¹ Interview with Haile, 24 July 2010.

the Netherlands, he has been openly criticising the policies of the government in several instances. He also participated in organising some social and political events which were not likeable by government supporters. As a result, he received a number of intimidations by anonymous phone callers by reason of which he had to change his phone number after repeated intimidating calls.⁵² In light of the above, it should come as no surprise to say that Eritrean diaspora communities host a significant number of human rights abusers who are legally, peacefully, openly and comfortably living with survivors of victimisation in the same communities without any legal consequences. As a very important factor that perpetuates victimisation, the distinctive role of diaspora actors in this regard merits an independent investigative research.

The above reveals that the arrival of Eritrean refugees in some safe havens, such as the Netherlands, does not necessarily imply the end of the history of victimisation. For some refugees, it is the beginning of a tertiary level of victimisation. In several instances, newly arriving Eritrean refugees are generally despised by government supporters.⁵³ The latter category of people is part of what is widely known as the first generation of Eritrean refugees. Many of them have left Eritrea during the war of independence. For them, migration in the post-independence era is equivalent to treason, for they believe that the major causes of migration have been eliminated when Eritrea was liberated in 1991. This claim is however hypocritical at worst and illogical at best, for those who despise newcomers have never been willing to repatriate ever since Eritrea's independence, the reason being the alarming level of political repression and economic hardship in the country.

The unabated continuation of tertiary victimisation in diaspora communities is a stark reminder of the pervasive culture of impunity in Eritrea. As noted by Metin Basoglu, impunity is a toxic substance which forces victims to develop a sense of anger, injustice, rage and distress, even after their arrival in safe havens.⁵⁴ This has apparent implications on these safe havens, which are host countries such as the Netherlands, in the sense that it has far-

⁵² Interview with Gile, 4 September 2010.

⁵³ On a related note, Müller opines that "individuals who define themselves outside the military collective [thinking of the PFDJ] are regarded as betraying the nation, and can in the eyes of the state's leadership legitimately be reduced to their bare life." Müller, *Bare Life*, 115.

⁵⁴ Metin Basoglu, "Rehabilitation of Traumatized Refugees and Survivors of Torture," *British Medical Journal* 333, (2006): 1230-1231.

fetching implications on the wellbeing of victims. Speedy recovery from trauma and the psychological impact of victimisation is an important component for the empowerment of victims of human rights violations and by extension for ending the culture of impunity in Eritrea. This may not be possible when victims feel threatened by continued intimidation and blackmailing and most of all by the enduring presence in their host communities of notorious government operatives who are perpetuating a perennial cycle of victimisation. Challenging the actions of such collaborators is one of the most important strategies in curbing the major causes of victimisation and designing effective mechanisms for the empowerment of victims.

7.3. Conclusion

Using data collected from Eritrean refugees in the Netherlands, this paper analysed pre- and post-migration patterns of victimisation among Eritrean refugees in the Netherlands. Although the data has geographical limitations restricted only to one country, it epitomises the plight of newly arriving Eritrean refugees in different countries, particularly those who have left Eritrea after 2002. The data shows that there are multiple levels of victimisation suffered by Eritrean refugees. The first level of victimisation is that which takes place in Eritrea. One major cause of victimisation at this level is prolonged military service which has now degenerated into a form of forced labour, a practice the prohibition of which has now assumed the status of a peremptory norm of international law. The second level of victimisation takes place when victims flee Eritrea and begin an arduous journey via the most common transit countries, such as Sudan and Libya, the latter being the most notorious place for secondary victimisation. The data reveals that the causes of victimisation narrated by interviewees at this stage are comparable only with paranormal stories told by best seller novels or Hollywood adventure movies. The corresponding level of trauma and psychological harm suffered by Eritrean refugees is difficult to imagine.

Eritrean refugees suffer from a third level of victimisation after their arrival in the Netherlands. In the normal course of things, arrival in the Netherlands should have been seen as a beginning of a new era of hope, dignity and safe heaven. In some cases, it is another stage of transition to tertiary victimisation. As a result of a remarkable level of control the Eritrean

government enjoys over its diaspora communities some Eritrean refugees are not immune from victimisation even after their arrival in the Netherlands. The case of Gile and Haile are most illustrative in this regard. The diaspora income tax regime officially implemented by Eritrean embassies and consular missions is one of the most common causes of tertiary victimisation in diaspora communities. Eritrean diaspora communities are deeply infiltrated by government informers and spies who report on the activities of exiled opposition groups and activists in a systematic and orchestrated manner. This has given rise to a significant number of human rights abusers who are legally, peacefully, openly and comfortably living with survivors of victimisation in the same communities without any legal consequences. There is a need to curb this by appropriate prosecutorial and non-prosecutorial approaches available under the domestic jurisdictions of those countries which host human rights abusers. These are very important steps both for the empowerment of victims of human rights violations and for ending the protracted culture of impunity in Eritrea.

This study also showed that Eritrean refugees are exposed to poly-traumatic experiences that occur in multiple contexts overtime. In practice, however, the psychological support mechanisms available for Eritrean refugees are very poor. This is indicative of the need to critically assess whether the current psychological support mechanisms available for refugees in the Netherlands are commensurate with the needs of victims of gross human rights violations.

CHAPTER EIGHT

POLITICAL DYNAMICS IN THE HORN OF AFRICA: COPING WITH FRAGMENTATION, ISOLATION AND MARGINALIZATION IN A GLOBALIZING ENVIRONMENT

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8.1 Introduction

This chapter provides general background information on the Horn of Africa countries. The aim is to provide the uninformed reader with some basic facts about the region in line with some latest political developments in the region.

The Horn of Africa is located in the far northeast region of Africa. It includes modern-day Eritrea, Ethiopia, Somalia, Djibouti, Sudan and South Sudan, with shores bordering the Red Sea, Gulf of Aden and the Indian Ocean. Due to the Horn's prime access to major sea routes, it has been a high traffic area for trade from many Arab and far Eastern territories dating back to the late seventh century.

The post-colonial countries of the Horn have been plagued with border disputes, civil unrest and droughts, as well as other natural and man-made calamities that often result in economic repression, civilian casualties, human rights violations and famine. Due to such adversities, countries in this region have also been hindered by various forms of oppression, unstable infrastructure development and displacement of the population. This imminent concept of territoriality and ethnic conflict has had dramatic effects on political and regional stability throughout the Horn.¹ Though there have been efforts made to improve democracy and human rights in the Horn of Africa, inadequate living standards, fuelled by the repression of democracy, combined with repressive military regimes as well as international intervention, has unfortunately marred the regional atmosphere.

¹ Alexander Attilio, "Geo-political explanations of conflict in the Horn of Africa," Organization for Social Science Research in Eastern and Southern Africa 2.4 (2006), available at http://www.ossrea.net/index.php?option=com_contentview=articleid=266 (accessed 18 June 2013).

The political dynamics of the Horn has, for quite some time, been characterized by instabilities and military conflicts. The Horn has been a stage for many conflicts that often involve regional and international forces. This chapter will provide a bird's-eye view of the contemporary political history as well as current political issues within the Horn of Africa, as are relevant to the sad state of affairs in the region, high levels of human rights violations.

8.2. Eritrea

Eritrea shares its borders with Ethiopia, Djibouti and Sudan, with a very long port access to the Red Sea. Formerly the country was an Italian colony. The country was ruled by the Italians from 1889 until 1941 when the Italians were defeated by the British. The British soon established a military administration that lasted until 1952 when Eritrea was then federated with Ethiopia (under UN mandate). The country gained its formal independence in a referendum in 1993 although it was militarily liberated in 1991². The current government, often criticized as being an authoritarian regime, has been led by President Isaias Afwerki since 1991. He was also the cofounder of the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF), which was established in the early 1970s.³ Though the Eritrean government has been under scrutiny for its excessive malpractice of governance, leading to the current level of political crisis in the country, its claims to have achieved marvellous progress in the expansion of social services, such as the provision of health, education and other services. For example, in the area of healthcare, the government says that there has been considerable decline in infant mortality rates.⁴

The gaining of Eritrean independence from Ethiopia, through the efforts of the EPLF, is a focal point in Eritrean history and Eritrean identity. The leadership and military expertise of Isaias Afwerki and his colleagues during the rebellion for independence from Ethiopia is

² Lloyd Ellingson, "The Emergence of Political Parties in Eritrea 1941-1950," *The Journal of African History*, 2009, 18(2), 261-281.

³ BBC, Eritrea Profile, 2013, available at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-13349078> (accessed 16 June 2013).

⁴ Overseas Development Institute, *Progress in Health in Eritrea cost-effective inter-sectoral interventions and long-term perspective*, 2010, available at http://www.developmentprogress.org/sites/developmentprogress.org/files/resource_document/eritrea_health.pdf (accessed 17 June 2013).

internationally recognized as a formidable accomplishment – men and women joined the EPLF army and fought for the independence of the country.

A border dispute with Ethiopia erupted in 1998, mainly in and around the town of Badme, ending June 2000 with a peace deal negotiated by the United Nations (UN).⁵ This conflict left Eritrea in great need of foreign aid, primarily for food as the country is unable to grow enough taff⁶ to feed its' people, consequently stunting economic growth.⁷ The lack of taff as a staple food is only a fraction of the problem the country currently faces. The government's stubborn policy of "self-reliance", without democratic political infrastructure, resulted in chronic food shortages and the sky rocketing prices of foodstuffs across the country.

The political stalemate of the no-peace-no-war situation with Ethiopia continuously undermines economic and political transformation. The current Eritrean regime uses this as an excuse to suppress fundamental rights of its citizens. Based on the numerous reports of international organizations such as the UN, Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International, the Eritrean government suppresses basic rights such as the right of movement, assembly, association and religion. As a result, a great number of Eritrean youth who suffered under appalling military and economic circumstances of the country flee towards Ethiopia and Sudan in large numbers.

Eritrea's domestic political environment is repressive while its regional role has quite often been referred by many international organizations as very destabilizing. The UN has already imposed "targeted sanctions" twice against the regime in Eritrea, but have not yet brought about any major impact on the regime. In February 2002, Eritrea's National Assembly officially forbade the creation of any other political party in the near future in order to maintain the hegemony of the ruling party. The current Eritrean government has also heavily censored media, including radio and television. President Isaias Afwerki continues to use the

⁵ United Nations Security Council, Resolution 1907 (2009), 2009, available at <http://www.customs.gov.sg/NR/rdonlyres/876D72D9-7B10-4881-9189-CC5E76B07CAC/21918/UNSCR19072009.pdf> (accessed 16 July 2013).

⁶ Eragrostis teff is one of the main crops consumed by Eritreans and Ethiopians and is the main ingredient in Injera.

⁷ BBC, Eritrea Profile, 2013, available at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-13349078> (accessed 16 June 2013).

border issues with Ethiopia to legitimize his stay in power by “iron-fist”, forcing the adult population to serve for extended periods in the national army and those who neglect to do their civic duty are punished by fines or imprisonment. The government tries to maintain economic autarky, by restricting foreign investment and free enterprise and has refused to accept foreign aid. In 2009, the UN placed sanctions on the country, forbidding the import and export of arms due to accusations that the government was providing financial and armed assistance to al-Qaeda via al-Shabab, a Somali Islamist group. To date, these allegations have been denied by the Eritrean government.⁸

According to Human Rights Watch, the Eritrean government has been accused of serious human rights violations, including restriction of movement of its citizens. Eritreans who attempt to flee the country without the appropriate documentation run the risk of being tortured, imprisoned or shot at the border. Those over the age of 50 find it nearly impossible to procure exit visas. The imposition of these laws, with deadly consequences, has resulted in Eritreans leaving the country seeking refuge in neighbouring countries including Ethiopia, Sudan, Kenya and Uganda.

The Eritrean government has also been accused of the repression of religion, with many citizens being threatened with imprisonment unless they renounce their faith. Eritreans fleeing to Sudan have been captured by Eritrean officials who crossed the border in search of those who escaped. A forced organ harvesting and ransom operation has surfaced in Sinai, Egypt which is another tragic reality for those trying to escape Eritrea. This operation has been speculated to be run by the Rashayida, an Arabic speaking demographic in Eritrea and Sudan. Detainees are tortured and women are raped until their relatives pay the ransom or their organs are illegally harvested.⁹

The lack of a government sanctioned and internationally regulated mechanism of exiting the country have forced refugees to resort to dangerous methods of escape including crossing deserts and oceans at their own risk. Many testimonials have revealed the mistreatment of

⁸ United Nations Security Council, note 5 above.

⁹ Dan Connell, “Escaping Eritrea: Why They Flee and What They Face,” Middle East Report, 264(2012): 2-9, available at <http://www.danconnell.net/sites/default/files/connell-eritrea%20refs%208.17.12.pdf> (accessed 18 August 2013).

those who have been caught trying to escape the Eritrean border. All these realities have compelled the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to warn the international community that Eritrean asylum seekers should not be returned to Eritrea because of the degree of risk they may face. Despite the severe consequences, Eritrea has become among the most refugee producing countries across the world.¹⁰

8.3. Ethiopia

Ethiopia, the second largest country in the Horn of Africa, shares borders with Eritrea, Somalia, Djibouti, Sudan, South Sudan and Kenya. Ethiopia is one of the oldest African countries that maintained independence during the colonial era, despite a momentary Italian occupation during the Second World War. Though one of the poorest nations in Africa, it has been recognized for having a rapidly growing economy.¹¹ From 1930-1974 the country was ruled by an Imperial regime led by Emperor Haile Selassie I, followed by the Derg regime, a dictatorship led by Mengistu Hailemariam (1974-1991). The Derg regime was then overthrown by the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), a rebel group, led by Meles Zenawi. Zenawi ruled the country from 1991 until August 2012 when he unexpectedly passed away.¹² Zenawi's passing left the Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn as his successor until the next election, which is planned for 2015. Ethiopia has had ongoing border disputes with neighbouring Eritrea since 1998, as well as long standing ethnic and territorial conflicts with Islamic forces from Somalia since the colonial times.¹³ The government has been accused of undemocratic behaviour as there has only been one leading party since the early 1990s. Examples of this include criticism by some citizens of staging rigged elections and showing preferential treatment to the people of Tigray (a province in northern Ethiopia). Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), is the central power of the

¹⁰ Human Rights Watch, *Service for life: State repression and indefinite conscription in Eritrea*, 2009, available at http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/eritrea0409webwcover_0.pdf (accessed 17 June 2013).

¹¹ BBC, *Ethiopia Profile*, 2013, available at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-13349398> (accessed 16 June 2013).

¹² Alemayehu Geda, "Political Economy of Growth in Ethiopia," *Growth Projects Manuscripts*: Cambridge University Press, 2007, 4(2), available at http://alemayehu.com/AA%20Recent%20Publication/Growth_CambChap_Sept2006.pdf (accessed 13 June 2013).

¹³ International Relations and Security Network, *Ethiopia's Ogaden Insurgency Threat*, 2009, available at <http://www.isn.ethz.ch/Digital-Library/Articles/Detail/?lng=en&id=110663> (accessed 8 July 2013).

EPRDF.¹⁴ Ethiopia has had formal elections in 1995, 2001, 2005 and 2010, which resulted in maintaining its one party system. Government oppression of civil liberties such as forbidding certain ethnic political parties from running for election as well as the use of violence directed towards protestors has drawn international attention from Human Rights Watch and World Bank.¹⁵

Ethiopia is home to many different ethnic groups and as a result has seen ethnic clashes. The Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) has garnered some attention through attempts at seeking autonomy from Ethiopia through civil conflict. Established in 1973, the OLF advocates that the Oromo people are entitled to the right to self-determination after centuries of Amhara domination. They claim that this organization is not targeted towards any group of people, but specifically to systemized oppression.¹⁶

Ethnic conflicts are also occurring in the Ogaden region of Ethiopia, where the majority of the population is ethnically Somali. The inhabitants of the region, led by the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF), have been struggling for autonomy. The ONLF is comprised of Ogaden clansmen and an estimated eight thousand fighters that are armed by Eritrean allies. Somali-Ethiopians have reported feelings of marginalization and exclusion from national institutions. There have been reports of human rights violations against these people such as torture, sexual abuse and unlawful imprisonment as a result of counterinsurgent methods in response to the ongoing issues in the region. Due to the violent conflicts between the Ogaden region and surrounding area, the Ethiopian government has labelled them as terrorists.¹⁷ There have been reports of human rights violations perpetrated by the Ethiopian government including incidences of the unjustified imprisonment of people under the Anti-Terrorism Proclamation.¹⁸ The Anti-Terrorism Proclamation was implemented in 2009 by the Ethiopian

¹⁴ Geda, note 12 above

¹⁵ Human Rights Watch, World Bank: Investigate “Development” Project Abuses, 2013, available at <http://www.hrw.org/news/2013/03/18/world-bank-investigate-development-project-abuses> (accessed 19 June 2013).

¹⁶ Oromo Liberation Front, OLF mission, 2013, available at <http://www.oromoliberationfront.org/OLFMission.htm> (accessed 19 June 2013).

¹⁷ International Relations and Security Network, Ethiopia's Ogaden Insurgency Threat, 2009, available at <http://www.isn.ethz.ch/Digital-Library/Articles/Detail/?lng=enid=110663> (accessed 8 July 2013).

¹⁸ Human Rights Watch, Ethiopia: Amend Draft Terror Law, 2009, available at <http://www.hrw.org/news/2009/06/30/ethiopia-amend-draft-terror-law> (accessed 19 June 2013).

government in an effort to discourage terrorism and strengthen national security. However, it has proven to be unclear in defining terrorism, and inconsistent in imposing penalties and judicial procedures.¹⁹

In March 2013, World Bank's Investigation Panel launched an inquiry into a project in Ethiopia called the Promotion of Basic Services due to allegations of human rights violations. The project was implemented in attempts to improve education, health care, water sanitation, agriculture and rural roads in the country. However the enforcement of acts of "villagization" are now under scrutiny. "Villagization" or the forced evacuation of Ethiopia's pastoralist and other marginalized populations has resulted in over 1.5 million displaced people. Forced to leave their homes and land and move into areas that are dry and infertile, families claim that there has not been any form of compensation and their standards of living have greatly declined. It has been speculated that these villagers have been forced to move so that the land can be sold to multinational corporations for large-scale farming.²⁰

8.4. Somalia

Somalia, bordered by Kenya, Ethiopia and Djibouti, the Gulf of Aden and the Indian Ocean, has been ravaged by civil unrest and government instability with constant Islamist insurgents for over the last twenty years.²¹ The country of Somalia was comprised of two territories, a former British Somaliland in the north and Italian Somalia in the south. The Somali Republic was created in 1960 when the two territories merged.²² In 1969, General Siad Barre became president of Somalia and was in power until 1991 when he was ousted through civil rebellion from opposing northern and southern clans. However, after the fall of Barre, the clans were

¹⁹ The Anti-Terrorism Proclamation has also had international affects, with the arrests of two Swedish journalists, who had attempted to interview members of the ONLF and therefore accused of terrorism upon entering Ethiopia. They were released in September 2012 after serving nearly a year and half in an Ethiopian prison.

²⁰ Human Rights Watch, Ethiopia: Forced Relocations Bring Hunger Hardship, 2012, available at <http://www.hrw.org/news/2012/01/16/ethiopia-forced-relocations-bring-hunger-hardship> (accessed 19 July 2013).

²¹ African Union. African Union Mission in Somalia, 2013, available at <http://amisom-au.org> (accessed 8 July 2013).

²² BBC, Somalia Profile, 2013, available at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-14094503> (accessed 13 June 2013).

unable to come to an agreement for the formation of a central government. This left Somalia in a chaotic and anarchic state of affairs. From 1991 until September 2012, when the parliament chose Hassan Sheikh Mohammed as president and in turn appointed Abdi Farah Shirdon Saaid as prime minister, Somalia was without a formal government, or with weak and dysfunctional “transitional governments” which are unable to govern the country in its entirety.

Somalia has had issues with Islamist fundamentalism over the years, primarily violence led by the group called al-Shabab. Broadly, one of the objectives of this group is for a highly centralized Islamic state. In 2006, al-Shabab declared allegiance to the globally known terrorist group al-Qaeda raising more international concern. According to reports of Human Rights Watch, al-Shabab has been targeting Somali schools for the recruitment of underage boys to serve as child soldiers, as well as underage girls for domestic work and forced marriage to al-Shabab fighters.²³ Recently, al-Shabab has targeted the capital city Mogadishu with indiscriminate attacks on civilians and foreign aid workers as a statement of opposition against the Islamic law – Sharia.²⁴ Since 2009, alongside Eritrea, the UN strengthened sanctions due to concerns of al-Qaeda’s link to al-Shabab.

Somalia has had a cataclysmic history traced back to the union of the two Somalian territories in 1960. The northern Somalians, known as Somalilanders, felt underrepresented in the government and believed there to be a bias in favor of their southern Somalian neighbours. In addition to this, a military coup leading Siad Barre into power in 1969 further drove a stake into the heart of peace throughout Somalia. Barre worsened the political atmosphere in Somalia by suspending Somalia’s “constitution and banned all forms of political and professional association”.²⁵ Barre’s socialist views greatly exacerbated the drought in the mid seventies, by an inability to allocate resources and implement appropriate resources for citizens, leading to widespread famine. The Ogaden war²⁶--resulting in an influx of refugees

²³ Human Rights Watch, Somalia: Warring parties put children at grave risk, 2012, available at <http://www.hrw.org/news/2012/02/21/somalia-warring-parties-put-children-grave-risk> (accessed 10 July 2013).

²⁴ Human Rights Watch, Somalia: New Al-Shabab attacks are war crimes, 2013, available at <http://www.hrw.org/news/2013/04/16/somalia-new-al-shabaab-attacks-are-war-crimes> (accessed 10 July 2013).

²⁵ Ismail I. Ahmed and Reginald H. Green, “The heritage of war and state collapse in Somalia and Somaliland: local level effects, external interventions and reconstruction,” *Third World Quarterly*, 20, no. 1 (1999): 116-117.

²⁶ War between Ethiopia and Somalia over the Ogaden region of Ethiopia.

in northern Somalia--created native residents to feel more frustrated with their standard of living. The government was later found to be recruiting these refugees into the army, creating more tension throughout Somalia.²⁷

The Republic of Somaliland, found in the northwest region of Somalia, though not recognized by the international community, is self-identified by Somalilanders as a sovereign state. After gaining independence in 1960 an agreement was made to form a union between the north and south, however following the military coup led by Barre, despite the recent convergence, many Somalilanders claim circumstances of mistreatment evidenced by violent attacks on civilians in the northern capital, Hargeisa. These events were the defining origins of the Somali civil war, with the resistance group called Somali National Movement (SNM) comprised of members of the northern region clan, Issaq, against government security forces. Finally in 1991, this civil conflict resulted in Barre being overthrown, with Somaliland renouncing its union with the south.²⁸ A referendum was later held in 2001, again showing the populations favor to remain separate from the south.²⁹ Since then, Somaliland has been recognized for having one of the most democratic systems in the region, employing traditional Somali concepts, such as consultation and consent, "...using customary norm, values and relationships"³⁰ in governance. There have been three consecutive elections since 2001, with healthy, parliament regulated opposition parties in Somaliland.³¹

Predominantly comprised of members of the Harti Clan and the Somali Salvation Democratic Front (SSDF), the northeastern region of the Somalia is known as Puntland. The SSDF believed that a decentralized form of governance was necessary to stabilize the country. This was thought to be achievable through the emergence of smaller autonomous states and, finally the rebuilding of a cohesive network of representation in parliament from the bottom-up³².

²⁷ Ismail I. Ahmed and Reginald H. Green, note 25 above.

²⁸ Michael Farrell, "Manufacturing territorial integrity with the International Court of Justice: the Somaliland-Puntland dispute and uti possidetis," *Washington University Global Studies Law Review*, 11, no 4 (2012): 817-827.

²⁹ Iqbal Jhazbhay, "Somaliland: Africa's best kept secret, A challenge to the international community?" *African Security Review*, 12, no. 4 (2003): 77-82.

³⁰ Seth Kaplan, "The Remarkable Story of Somaliland," *Journal of Democracy*, 12, no. 3(2008): pp.144.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 144.

³² Brian J. Hesse, "Lessons in successful Somali governance," *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, 28, no. 1(2010): 71-83..

On May 5, 1998, the Garowe Declaration, named after the capital of state, declared Puntland an autonomous region. Puntland, unlike Somaliland, sought to achieve, not independence, but the formation of an autonomous regional state. However, they failed to produce an interim government, leaving the territory in the hands of clansmen leaders³³.

Though Somaliland and Puntland have been recognized for maintaining a relatively stable political atmosphere, there has been violent conflict between Somaliland and Puntland. Violent outbreaks between the northern neighbours have been over what has been referred to as the “SSC regions”, which includes Sool, Sanaag and Cayn. Tension arises due to both territories laying claim over the regions.³⁴

The African Union has created an initiative called the 'African Union Mission in Somalia' which, according to their website, is “mandated to conduct Peace Support Operations in Somalia to stabilize the situation in the country in order to create conditions for the conduct of Humanitarian affairs and an immediate take over by the United Nations (UN)”.³⁵ Deployed armed forces of the African Union include soldiers from Uganda, Kenya, Djibouti, Burundi, Sierra Leone and in the past, from Ethiopia. Reportedly, however, violations of human rights are committed not only by al-Shabab, but also by foreign armed forces, such as those deployed by the African Union.³⁶

Somali women and girls have reported numerous accounts of sexual assault during violent conflict throughout the region. Somali police have been accused of treating victims of sexual assault without empathy, even slandering their character. There have been reports of instances where individuals who have tried to intervene in these acts of brutality have been imprisoned for other crimes including insulting a government body. The frustrating process of turmoil in Somalia, along with al-Shabab's acts of violence continues to result in widespread contempt for intervention, and failure of the international community to help the Somali's attain a sustainable solution. Extremists continue to engage in violent acts of terrorism in the region

³³ Farrell, note 29 above

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ African Union. African Union Mission in Somalia, 2013, available at <http://amisom-au.org> (accessed 8 July 2013).

³⁶ They have been reported for acts of wrongful imprisonment and detention, as well as violence towards civilians in the South and Central areas of Somalia.

and discontent against the international community continues to grow. As a demonstration to this, there has been a growing issue of piracy off the shores of Somalia, with cases of robbery and ransom of international ships and crewmembers. The United Nations Political Office for Somalia, a mission managed by the Department of Political Affairs, is working towards ending criminal activities off the shores of Somalia.³⁷

Despite gross human rights violations during the past twenty years, Somalia, as of May 2013, has created a provisional government that has been making strides to provide the establishment of a National Human Rights Commission. However, Somalia's political and military turmoil is far from over. If matters continue at an unsustainable level, as they have been, Somali extremists will continue to pose a threat to regional and international peace. Unless reconciliation and a sustainable solution is attained, Somalia will continue to be a hot spot in the Horn's political affairs.

8.5. *Djibouti*

Djibouti, the smallest of the countries in the Horn of Africa, borders Eritrea, Ethiopia, Somalia, the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden. Djibouti's president, Ismail Omar Guelleh, and appointed Prime Minister, Abdoukader Kamil Mohamed, together have kept a relatively stable political atmosphere since being elected in 1994. Similar to its neighbour Eritrea, after gaining independence in June 1977, Djibouti had a one party government, called the People's Rally for Progress (PRP).³⁸ Djibouti's National Assembly is comprised of the ethnicities found in the country including the Issa (of Somali origin), the Afar (also of Ethiopian and Eritrean origin), as well as other minor Somali tribes.³⁹

In 1977, President Hassan Gouled Aptidon, ethnically a member of the Issa tribe, was elected, consequently without allowing for the proper representation of the Afar, because of Djibouti's

³⁷ Department of Political Affairs, Piracy off the coast of Somalia, 2013, available at https://www.un.org/wcm/content/site/undpa/main/activities_by_region/africa/somalia_piracy (accessed 26 July 2013).

³⁸ African Union, Republic of Djibouti, 2013, available at <http://www.au.int/en/content/republic-djibouti> (accessed 22 July 2013).

³⁹ Maps of World, Government Politics of Djibouti, 2013, available at <http://www.mapsofworld.com/djibouti/government-and-politics/> (accessed 13 June 2013).

one party system. Due to the Afar's political repression, civil conflict broke out and it was not until the 1990's that Aptidon allowed for a limited multi-party system under pressure from the international community – notably France. However, even with this change, an Afar dominated political group called the Front for the Restoration for Unity and Democracy (FRUD), is still excluded from participating. This reign of a single party authoritarian government came to an end in 1994 with a power sharing deal between the Issa (PRP) and the Afar (FRUD).⁴⁰

Djibouti provides main port access for Ethiopian trade, but also acts as, “a hub for international naval forces combating piracy in one of the world's busiest shipping routes stretching from the Gulf of Aden to the Indian Ocean”.⁴¹ This is due to not only Djibouti's proximity to shipping channels, but also because of the political stability in the region and peaceful relationships with international neighbours – except with Eritrea.

Due to the current state of peace in Djibouti, it has become a place of refugees for many displaced people within the region. Djibouti has become a place where many from the Horn of Africa seek asylum from their less favourable homes. The UNHCR's, 'Planning Figures of 2013 for Djibouti' has estimated the most common refugees in Djibouti, including Eritrean (about 650), Ethiopian (about 880) and the majority Somali (about 23,000), will increase to 850, 1100 and 27,000 respectively by the end of the year; and all of whom will be assisted by the UNHCR.⁴² Based on accounts of refugees, however, Djibouti fails to provide adequate and fair treatment of refugees, specifically for Eritrean refugees in the country. The living conditions of Eritrean refugees in Djibouti are reported to be appalling.

Though Djibouti is politically stable, there have been reported incidents of human rights violations. The Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labour has reported, oppression of

⁴⁰ BBC, Republic of Djibouti, 2013, available at <http://www.au.int/en/content/republic-djibouti> (accessed 22 July 2013).

⁴¹ UNHCR: The UN Refugee Agency, 2013 UNHCR regional operations profile-East and Horn of Africa, 2013, available at <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/tehis/vtx/page?page=49e4838e6> (accessed 16 July 2013).

⁴² The Guardian, UNHCR 2012: Refugee statistics: Full data, 2013, available at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/news/datablog/2013/jun/19/refugees-unhcr-statistics-data> (accessed 24 July 2013).

political freedom of speech, censorship, arbitrary arrest, corruption and inadequate protection of refugees⁴³, to name a few, from the Djiboutian government.⁴⁴

8.6. Sudan

Sudan, located in the far west of the Horn is bordered by Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, South Sudan, Chad, Libya and the Central African Republic, with port access to the Red Sea. Sudan, including the province of Darfur, has had a complicated and violent history which continues to present day. Sudan is home to different ethnic tribes, many of whom refer to themselves as of Arab descent (39%), African origin (30%), Beja (12%), Nubian (15%) and other (4%). The predominant religion in Sudan is Islam, followed by Christianity and some that follow traditional African beliefs. Prior to gaining independence in 1956, Sudan had historical ties with Egypt and through that with Britain, due to the colonial history of the region. Beginning in 1820, Muhammad Ali, the pasha of Egypt, ordered armed forces to occupy Sudan – this was successful until 1885 during which Sudan accomplished self-rule through an Islamic movement called Mahdiya (a form of jihad).⁴⁵ Thirteen years later in 1898, with combined efforts from both British and Egyptian forces, Egypt regained power over Sudan. In 1956, joint Egypt-British rule ended, freeing Sudan of centuries of colonial rule. According to the UNHCR, as of January 2013 there are 2.3 million internally displaced persons, 140 000 refugees and 7000 asylum seekers located in Sudan.⁴⁶

The current president of Sudan, Omar Hassan al-Bashir, alongside Hassan al-Turabi who dominated the National Islamic Front (NIF) for many years before he finally fell out of favor⁴⁷, assumed power in 1989 through a military coup. However, it was not until 1996 that al-Bashir was elected into power as president while al-Turabi continued to become an important figure in the political environment of the country for a number of years to come.

⁴³ The protection of these refugees and their rights in Djibouti is very controversial. For example, many Eritrean refugees in the country complain of violations of these two basic needs by being put in refugee camps for years becoming vulnerable to communicable diseases such as Tuberculosis

⁴⁴ Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, 2010 Human Rights Report: Djibouti, 2011, available at <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/2010/af/154343.htm> (accessed 8 July 2013).

⁴⁵ “Jihad” means holy war in Arabic.

⁴⁶ These refugees and asylum seekers are from surrounding Ethiopia, Eritrea, Chad and the DRC.

⁴⁷ The NIF supports Shira Law, Islamic Law, and condemns secularism.

Though elections have occurred since his initial power inauguration, their legitimacy has been severely questioned.⁴⁸ The Sudanese government has been accused for being highly oppressive and is known to disregard human rights with the ill-treatment, torture and arbitrary arrest of civilians. Non-profit organizations promoting democracy have been forced to leave Sudan; and the local media has been severely censored as well.⁴⁹ There are currently warrants out for al-Bashir's arrest, placed by the International Criminal Court in The Hague on counts of war crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity in Darfur.⁵⁰

Sudan is rich in mining opportunities and oil reserves, many of which were lost to South Sudan in the 2011 secession. However, the country's internal conflict has caused a shutting down of oil export and a loss of international trading partners. Instability within the country as well as tensions with South Sudan and the abuses within Darfur have made it difficult for Sudan to reap the benefits of such an economic advantage.

Darfur, a province in western Sudan, has been an area of violent civil conflict between rebel groups, the Sudanese Liberation Army (SLA) and the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), against the Khartoum supported Janjaweed⁵¹ since 2003. Prior to the formation of South Sudan, the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, signed by the North and South, insured a ceasefire. Yet, it did not address the issues of Darfur. In 2003, following attacks on Khartoum, the capital of Sudan, the government armed the Janjaweed, who are accused of ethnic cleansing in Darfur. The Janjaweed are comprised of Darfur's camel-herding Arab tribes and, as of more recently, refugees from Chad, both of whom have their own personal agenda for Darfur.⁵²

The Janjaweed pillaged villages, setting fire to whatever is left, forcing these displaced villagers into refugee camps where the Janjaweed continue their terror. The Janjaweed raided

⁴⁸ BBC, Sudan Profile, 2013, available at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-14094995> (accessed 5 August 2013).

⁴⁹ Human Rights Watch, Human Rights in Sudan, 2013, available at <http://www.hrw.org/news/2013/06/19/human-rights-sudan> (accessed 19 June 2013).

⁵⁰ Alison J. Ayers, "Sudan's Uncivil War: The Global-Historical Constitution of Political Violence," *Review of African Political Economy*, 2010, 27(124), 153-171.

⁵¹ "Janjaweed" in the local linguistic context, means "devil on horseback".

⁵² Alex De Waal, "Darfur and the failure of the responsibility to protect," *International Affairs* 83, no. 6(2007), 1039-1054.

these camps slaughtering people and there have been many reports of sexual violence on both male and female refugees. The Janjaweed are paid by loot, and have been known to rape scores of women and girls. There have also been reports of women leaving the refugee camps to fetch water or fire wood and being ambushed by the Janjaweed rebels and raped.⁵³ Rape is not only used as a weapon of warfare by the Janjaweed. Due to the mass number of displaced people forced to occupy land from which they do not originate, rape is also committed by other men from neighbouring tribes as a form of racial hatred; with the ultimate goal of removing these refugees from land that the perpetrators consider their own. All these gruesome violations of human rights in Darfur were observed by the international community, but without significant attempts of solving the crises – which the UN called an instance of genocide against the people of Darfur. The US State Department launched an investigation on whether the events occurring in Darfur were classified as a genocide, they found this to be correct.⁵⁴ Ultimately, the International Criminal Court (ICC) issued a warrant of detention against al-Bashir, though still in place, the actual detention of al-Bashir is still yet to materialize.

8.7. *South Sudan*

South Sudan shares borders with Ethiopia, Sudan, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Uganda and Kenya. South Sudan, the newest country in Africa and the world, gained independence on July 9, 2011. The capital of South Sudan is Juba and the current president is Salva Kir Mayardit. The country is comprised of three main Nilotic ethnic groups, which include the Dinka, Nuer and Shuluk tribes.

In 2005, the Comprehensive Peace Agreement was signed between the Northern and Southern leaders. Shortly after a referendum was held, South Sudan became a sovereign state.⁵⁵ Despite the signed peace agreement, the Abyei area, slightly north of South Sudan and rumoured to have oil, is still under dispute threatening peaceful relations between the two neighbours. The

⁵³ Human Rights Watch, Sudan: Five Years On- No Justice for Sexual Violence in Darfur, April 2008, available at <http://www.hrw.org/reports/2008/darfur0408/darfur0408webwcover.pdf> (accessed 5 August 2013).

⁵⁴ Alex De Waal, note 52 above.

⁵⁵ UNMIS, The Background to Sudan's Comprehensive Peace Agreement, N.D., available at <http://unmis.unmissions.org/Default.aspx?tabid=515> (accessed 9 August 2013).

South Sudanese government has been battling rebel insurgency and by doing so, has caused many civilians to flee their homes. There have been accusations of human rights violations including torture, killing and rape due to the neglect of the government to intervene in inter-ethnic conflict, a result of the Anti-Insurgency Campaign implemented by the government.⁵⁶ South Sudan sees many ethnic clashes between the Lou Nuer and the Murle. Such clashes have caused the displacement of many people.

Though autonomous, South Sudan is still left with the similar issues it faced prior to independence. Many live below the poverty line; have inadequate access to resources, such as medical facilities, and education. Internal conflicts and human rights violations continue to become potential dangers of national and regional security in Southern Sudan. South Sudan is rich in oil reserves, but the lack of stability and infrastructure has made it impossible for the country to benefit from such resources and to evenly distribute the wealth throughout the country.

8.8. Conclusion

Despite some semblance of regional stability, compared to previous years, there are still many challenging issues in the Horn of Africa, such as the issue of pervasive poverty, inadequate access to social services, and conflict-prone government policies. Combined with the regions vulnerability to drought and civil unrest, the Horn of Africa has produced some of the largest numbers of refugees worldwide. According to the 2012 UNHCR report, Somalia is the second largest refugee producing nation in the world with 1 136 100 refugees last year and with Eritrea being the tenth most refugee producing country with 285 100.⁵⁷

An unfortunate reality in the Horn of Africa is the prevalence of drought which most commonly leads to famine. However, according to a nongovernmental organization, Oxfam, famine is the result of three failures, the failure to produce food, the inaccessibility of food to

⁵⁶ Human Rights Watch, South Sudan: Army Making Ethnic Conflict Worse, July 19, 2013, available at <http://www.hrw.org/news/2013/07/19/south-sudan-army-making-ethnic-conflict-worse> (accessed 9 August 2013).

⁵⁷ The Guardian, note 35 above.

the people and delayed political response by government and international donors.⁵⁸ Ethiopia suffered a widespread famine in the mid-1980s, which sparked international efforts for relief in the affected areas. In 2011, Somalia was severely affected by drought and famine, worsened by civil conflict, and according to the World Food Programme, over thirteen million people suffered the consequences.⁵⁹

Eritrea has had a tumultuous history of regional problems associated with the political dynamics of the country. The government is accused of being an authoritarian dictatorship, highly regulating the countries civilian activity, but with a lack of attention to the needs and wants of the people that has gained international attention. Since 1993, there has not been any reform or elections in Eritrea and therefore has had no political change or shift in power. The Eritrean government alleges that it is striving to be entirely self-sustaining, yet, no trace of popular support for such an attempt has been recorded, nor does the government demonstrate its achievements in any written form.⁶⁰ The Eritrean people continue to suffer from not only food shortages, but the majority of the population is unable to afford the ever-increasing price of foodstuffs. The government keeps the productive manpower of the country in forced conscription, an endless program known as the National Service.⁶¹ With the worsening political and religious suppression, lack of many social freedoms and widespread arbitrary imprisonment throughout the country, Eritrea has been referred to by some international media as “the North Korea of Africa”. Given the current circumstances, and if the international community is not involved to help in achieving transformation, the government will continue to nurture a profoundly polarized society with a high potential for civil war.⁶²

⁵⁸ Oxfam International, Food crisis and conflict in Somalia, 2013, available at <http://www.oxfam.org/en/emergencies/somalia-conflict> (accessed 19 June 2013).

⁵⁹ World Food Programme, Horn of Africa Crisis, 2013, available at <http://www.wfp.org/crisis/horn-of-africa> (accessed 26 July 2013).

⁶⁰ For example, the Eritrean government does not publish annual budgets, reports of economic development or any other government document that shows any development in a transparent manner.

⁶¹ Human Rights Watch, Service for life: State repression and indefinite conscription in Eritrea, 2009, available at http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/eritrea0409webwcover_0.pdf (accessed 17 June 2013).

⁶² For further details on human rights violations in Eritrea visit, "Human Rights Watch Reports", Human Rights Watch, 2013: <http://www.hrw.org/africa/eritrea>; "Amnesty International Reports," Amnesty International, 2013, accessed July 30, 2013, <http://www.amnesty.org/en/region/eritrea>;"UN Human Rights Council: Report of the Special Rapporteur on Eritrea Confirms Patterns of Abuses," Human Rights Watch, 2013, accessed July 28, 2013, <http://www.hrw.org/news/2013/06/05/un-human-rights-council-report-special-rapporteur-eritrea-confirms-patterns-abuses>

In the case of Ethiopia, though acknowledged for having a growing economy, still appears to have great setbacks when it comes to civil liberties. Ethiopia's growing prosperity is tainted by the oppression of political parties, mistreatment of opposition and abuse of marginalized peoples, which continues to stunt the country due to the lack of proper attention to the distribution of resources. With the death of Ethiopia's only leader since the fall of the Derg regime, Meles Zenawi, the appointed successor Hailemariam Desalegn will hold office until the next election in 2015. Though it seems politically unlikely, this may be an opportunity for Ethiopia to see some genuine political change. The probabilities for such a peaceful political transformation in Ethiopia are yet to be seen.

Somalia has suffered from political anarchy and chaos for decades; and despite the efforts made in forming and maintaining a central government and relative stability in its northern autonomous regions, advancements are still needed for the people displaced by the conflict. Somalia has suffered from severe droughts causing widespread famine and unfortunately ongoing conflict has made it incredibly challenging to supply aid from international donors.⁶³ The growing issue of al-Shabab in Somalia can be attributed, not to their fundamentalist approach, but to the violent means they resort to – to gain political power over Somalia. Somalia is divided into six major clans, and each clan contains sub-clans. Despite a similarity in ethnicity, culture, language and religion, Somalia remains dismembered due to clan affiliations. It has been speculated that, as in the case of most post-colonial African countries, that the imposition of Western governance and bureaucracy, on traditional Somali fundamentals, has left the country in a chaotic “failed” state.⁶⁴

Djibouti has maintained a relatively stable political environment, which has allowed for peaceful relations with Ethiopia, Somalia and other international partners. Djibouti has also become a host to many refugees and asylum seekers, as well as an international hub for port access. However, there have been allegations of human rights violations, such as mistreatment of political opposition and lack of protection of refugees. Such dire allegations can be very concerning due to the large number of refugees in Djibouti.

⁶³ Oxfam International, note 51 above.

⁶⁴ Seth Kaplan, note above 35.

Sudan, home to many ethnic groups and diverse resources, has been marred by violent civil conflict since independence in 1956. The combination of having many ethnic groups and the world's growing demand for oil, can be attributed to the growing tension within the country. The greed of those in charge of rebel militias and government, fuelled by the hate-filled distinction of ethnicity has exacerbated situations in Sudan, especially Darfur. Despite international efforts to capture president al-Bashir to face international criminal justice, he has not yet been tried for his crimes against humanity due to failures to arrest him.

South Sudan, although a very new country, has an incredible feat ahead of it. Inter-ethnic conflict and violent disputes with Sudan over Abyei are ongoing issues. Current isolated ethnic clashes can escalate to large scale warfare if left unattended. This has shown to be the case in many countries of the Horn and can very well be the same for South Sudan.

The countries in the Horn of Africa have many ethnic groups. The self-identification with one's ethnicity has fuelled many of the atrocities that have occurred in the region. It is apparent that there needs to be abandonment of this over-emphasis of ethnicity in the government and ethnocentrism in society. The concept of ethnicity is further masked by nationalism which exacerbates internal turmoil and continuing conflict. The scramble for wealth and power may continue as a major cause of conflicts in the Horn of Africa and this can be seen clearly, for example, in tensions in Sudan and Darfur regarding oil piping.

It appears that these countries are scrambling for legitimacy through wealth and autonomy. However, the current circumstances of the region show that this is not the road to success. Each country has its own unique needs with individual strengths and specific issues surrounding power. However, in order to guarantee sustainable change across the region there needs to be implementation of a representative democracy with legitimate elections, an abandonment of ethnic superiority and an attentive, organized system of community support catering to the marginalized peoples in each region.

There appears to be a theme in the political culture of the Horn of Africa that has extended beyond parliament. The continued emphasis of ethnicity, hyper-nationalism, along with the ultimate goal of autonomy, will lead the region to complete dismemberment. With the

abundance of ethnicities in the region, autonomy will not necessarily guarantee harmony. This struggle has led to harsh measures being taken in attempts to accomplish regional needs. These ultimately increase conflicts leading to mass human rights violations.

After reviewing the current state of affairs in all countries of the Horn of Africa a few common aspects appear across the board. In each of these countries, there are multiple ethnic groups that both in the past and presently have suffered from ethnic tensions leading to conflict and violence. Each country has had accusations of oppression of its people and allegations of abuse of major human rights. These factors combined with the overall instability of the political dynamics in the Horn of Africa, has resulted in the region producing some of the world's greatest numbers of displaced peoples, refugees and asylum seekers across the globe.

CHAPTER NINE

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Mussie Tesfagiorgis

The Horn of Africa comprises diverse cultures and resources. Great majority of the people of the Horn depend on agriculture for a living. The types of agricultural sectors commonly applicable in the region include: subsistence or transhumant farming, sedentary farming and pastoralism. The economic modes of the peoples of the Horn are mostly dependent on the climatic and geographical features of the region. While farming is often practiced in higher altitudes or plateaus, pastoralism is practiced in lower altitudes where the ecosystems are often fragile. Amidst global climatic alterations, the peoples of the Horn continue to suffer from ecological adversities as well inconsistent economic performances in terms of subsistence productions. Pastoralism, which has been one of the most of important economic activities for over millennia, continues to become an important economic sector in the region. However, this economic activity is usually persistent in fragile ecosystems. The fact that the people who adhere to this economic mode suffer from climatic adversities implies that there has been a remarkable struggle for adjustment amidst ecological adversities. The peoples of the Horn, be it in the pastoral or subsistence cultivation sectors, developed age-long strategies of survival. However, these strategies have been badly tested by Mother Nature and by the given political and military chaos through the last decades. Such sad developments have adverse effects on human security and human development objectives in the region.

The economic challenges created by climatic adversities are only part of the overall major challenges that people of this region are affected by. In a global context, this region is located at one of the most strategic locations. Its geographical importance, however, has not been used for positive economic and social transformation for over a century. The Horn of Africa's past is mostly characterized by turbulent political circumstances through the colonial and post-colonial periods. During the post-colonial era, given to its strategic location in the context of international commerce, the Horn of Africa became a hot spot of the Cold War. In

addition, the prevalent struggles for self-determination in the region had tremendous implications on the every-day life of the people of this region.

As most parts of Africa, the Horn of Africa, with the exception of Ethiopia, had been part of the colonial realm. The colonial experience of this region, as in most parts of the continent, affected the cultural, political, as well as economic infrastructure of the region. The legacy of colonialism has been affecting this region negatively through the post-colonial period. Even Ethiopia, a country which claimed and maintained its independence through the colonial era has been far from being a beacon of hope and change in the region. Political transformation has never been a smooth process. Through the 1970s and 1980s, Ethiopia suffered not only from lack of good governance, but also from man-made and natural calamities such as persistent drought and famine. The political history of Ethiopia in the course of the last decades has been characterized by revolutions and territorial wars with neighbouring countries – specifically with Eritrea and Somalia. Moreover, the country sustained remarkable internal instabilities where some groups, such as the Oromo, struggled to attain self-autonomy.

The political history of this region not only during the post-colonial era, but also during and before the colonial era has been one of the most complex developments in the world. As mentioned above, the political environment of the countries of the region has been characterized by a number of factors that affected the way of life of the peoples of the region, including: protracted political strife, identity politics and inter- and intra-state conflicts.⁶⁵ Yet, one of the most important factors that aggravated the political turmoil of the region since the 1960s is foreign intervention in matters of domestic affairs. During the Cold War, both the Soviet Union and the US fiercely competed over creating their respective domains of influence in the region. Especially the Soviets pumped massive amount of military support to some states of this region. The capacity of their military involvement, be it in Somalia, Ethiopia or Eritrea, is still visible in the junkyards of war-related equipment – a good example being the Kagnev Military Station in Eritrea. The cumulative effect of such interventions were revealed in a form of military explosion in Somalia in the 1990s and afterwards, and other parts of the Horn. As a result, the Horn of Africa was shaken by waves of political

⁶⁵ Identity politics in this context refers to ethnic and clan-based conflicts that have been prevalent in countries in this region, such as in Somalia and Sudan.

disorders through the post-Soviet era. The US supported by the UN (through its UN Operations in Somalia – 1993-1995 (UNOSOM I and II)) did involve itself as a peacekeeping force in Somalia for some years in the post-Siad Barre regime in Somalia (1990s). The result was, however, to create more chaos and disorders across Somalia. The UNOSOM missions resulted in a failure to attain peace in that country while the overall political turmoil continued to ravage that country for many years to come. Even today, the country is far from being stable.

Somalia's contemporary history is also characterized by regional and international intervention. While extremist groups collectively known as the Islamic Courts of Somalia rose and started to affect every fabric of the country. Based on controversial security concerns, Ethiopia was also involved in the conflict in Somalia by invading the country. Although Ethiopia's intervention weakened the Islamist forces for the time being, their influence in the country is far from over. The country started to fragment into "autonomous states" such as Puntland and Somaliland starting from 1998. The fragmentation of regions within the country continued to nurture conflicts ever since then. The al-Shabab, one of the most renowned Islamist extremists in the country, continued to dominate affairs of conflict throughout the region.

The fragmented state of affairs in Somalia was accompanied by extensive piracy activities that became one of the major threats for the international commerce since 2005. This threat had its long-standing causes: the increasing political and military turmoil in the country, increasing irresponsible actions of international actors which dumped toxic waste on the Indian Ocean and Red Sea coasts of Somalia as well as persistent droughts. All these factors affected the Somali society in a negative way. The people who depended on fishing were badly affected by implications of toxic waste in the territories of the country. As a cumulative result, many turned to become outlaws in the seas (as pirates) affecting global trading lines. Many countries from the West had to deploy maritime forces to protect their vessels – of course, all these counter reactions of trading countries also demanded them billions of dollars.

In Eritrea, the impact of the Cold War resulted in massive disorders on military, social and political terms. When Ethiopia annexed Eritrea in 1962, Eritrean pro-independence elements

had already organized a military reaction to Ethiopia's actions. Hence, a liberation organization, called the Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF) was created in 1961. This organization challenged Ethiopia's political stand on Eritrea in the form of armed liberation struggle. Although this struggle suffered from many internal ups and downs, the organization was later substituted (in an aggressive military manner) by another organisation known as the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF). With time, the latter attained massive support of the civilian population. Based on Eritrean people's support, and adhering to Maoist principles, the EPLF led the liberation war for almost two decades. The war ended with the defeat of the communist regime in Ethiopia. The Ethiopian regime was replaced by a coalition of Ethiopian liberation movement, under the dominant leadership of the Tigrean People's Liberation Front (TPLF). It shall be noted that the TPLF and EPLF cooperated in many fronts to defeat the communist regime in Ethiopia and Eritrea. In May 1993, with the acknowledgement of the regime in Ethiopia, Eritrea attained its formal independence from Ethiopia.

However, independent Eritrea's post-war environment was highly turbulent. After enjoying a few years of political instability, the country went to another chapter of war with Ethiopia – this time a border war (1998-2000). The war was based on claims of both countries on a specific area called Badme. However, the implications of the war were felt in almost every part of the borders between the two countries. The war was technically a conventional war in which both countries applied all types of military equipment at their disposal. For example, Asmara, the capital of Eritrea, was bombed by Ethiopian war planes, while Mekele, a major city in northern Ethiopia was also bombed by Eritrean war planes as retaliation. Both countries conscripted massive numbers of army, and fought conventional war at the borders. Hundreds of thousands of lives were lost in those wars.

Sudan, with its unsustainable political environment, also suffered from remarkable internal conflicts through the last decades. The country suffered from internal conflicts first between 1955 and then between 1983 and 2005. The first war was known as the Anyanya Rebellion, and it was a destructive war fought between northern and southern parts of the country. The southerners who felt alienated by the north demanded more representation and political autonomy from the north. The Anyanya Rebellion resulted in the formation of the South Sudan Liberation Movement (SSLM). This organization took the lead in the struggle for

independence until agreements were reached in 1972 between the north and SSLM. However, the agreements did not bring a lasting solution to the problem, and so another phase of war started in 1983. As a continuation of the last war, the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLM) was founded in 1983. The SPLA led the war in South Sudan for many years to come. Although negotiations and agreements were signed between the two parties, no peaceful resolution was attained until 2005. Millions of people died in both phases of the war.⁶⁶ After years of struggle, South Sudan joined the club of nations as an independent nation in 2011.

The crisis in Sudan was, however, not limited to the South-North conflict. Another major region in the country – Darfur hosted another major conflict between the Darfurians and the government of Sudan. The war reached its peak magnitude in 2003 and 2004. Referred to as “genocide” by some international actors, the war affected every fabric of Darfur's social, economic and political infrastructure. Hundreds of thousands of people were massacred while over a million people left their homes to seek refuge in neighbouring countries, especially in Chad.

The other important phase of development in this region is related to experiences of state-formation and nation building. The nations in the region have been crawling for attaining a workable nation, and their strategies have theoretically been focused towards this development. Yet, nation building in its practical terms has not yet been materialized, and the countries, as in many parts of the developing world, find themselves in a state of prolonged process of change for a better governance, economic performance and political stability. The turbulent political circumstances in the region, among others, result in the production of massive numbers of refugees and internally displaced peoples.

Overall, this troubled region of Africa sustains scars of prolonged conflicts. However, the scars have not remained simply as scars; they are often scratched by political circumstances to cause fresh wounds and bloodshed. Contemporary Horn of Africa is far from being sustainable. The political turmoil continues to affect millions of people. Thousands of people

⁶⁶ “The Lost Boys”, audio, video and text publication demonstrating a widely publicized cause of forced conscription and brutalities of war in South Sudan is a good example of the degree of complexity of the war in South Sudan.

flee their homes to seek refuge elsewhere on monthly basis. Many are languishing on the process of migration.

The chapters in this volume provided detailed data and analysis regarding latest developments in the Horn of Africa's political dynamics. The issues discussed included the contemporary refugee crisis in the region, including the challenge of human trafficking and organ harvesting. Considering a few case studies of the odysseys of Eritrean refugee experiences in North Africa, it provided with detailed features of contemporary challenges faced by Horn of African refugees in the continent. Discussed in this volume are also the living experiences of self-determination struggles of the region in a global context, for example, by comparing the experiences of other liberation struggles in West Asia and Central America. On this particular topic, struggle for self-determination, such as that of the Oromo people in Ethiopia, and the latest experience in South Sudan was covered with particular emphasis. The common and recurring theme of the chapters can be summarized in the following observation. The Horn of Africa remains a region, which has been acutely deprived of "non-military solutions" to the problems that underlie the conflicts of the region. The result is a group of fragile states, characterized by low levels of achievement in human development and human security.

ANNEXURE

TIMELINE OF KEY EVENTS IN THE HORN OF AFRICA

Mussie Tesfagiorgis

The following list of events in the Horn of Africa is intended to provide the reader with a general overview of events about the region this book focuses. However, it shall be noted that this list is neither exhaustive nor complete in any manner. The whole idea of providing this list in this section is intended to help readers have a general picture of historical as well as contemporary major events in the Horn of Africa.

Djibouti

- 1860s European powers show colonial interests in North Africa and the Red Sea region.
- 1869 A marking point for the consolidation of colonial interests takes place when the Suez Canal was opened – connecting the Mediterranean Sea, the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean – Nov. 17
- 1881-1884 The French competed (mainly with the British and the Italians) for colonial settlement in the region, and secured agreements with the Sultan of Tadjoura for this purpose.
- 1884 The French established a “Protectorate” after signing agreements with two significant Sultans (rulers) of the area – Sultan Obock and Sultan Tadjoura.
- 1888 The French formally declared that the French Somaliland had become their colony – its formal name became *Côte Française des Somalis* (French Somaliland)
- 1888-1890 The French engaged in massive construction of port facilities in the capital - Djibouti.
- 1896 Djibouti became the capital of the colony of French Somaliland.
- 1897 An agreement was signed between Ethiopia and France, and the port of Djibouti now became an important sea outlet for Ethiopia – the Ethio-Italian relations regarding the ports in Eritrea were not amiable at this point. Ethiopia was fighting battles against Italian expansion in the coasts of Eritrea. This came to an end in 1889 when the Emperor of Ethiopia – Yohannes IV was killed by Muslim forces

- from Sudan, and Ethiopia. With the death of Yohannes IV, political circumstances also changed in the Horn.
- 1988 France and Ethiopia agreed and signed some protocols and treaties regarding the borders between these two territories.
- 1917 In agreement with Ethiopia, the French built a long but effective railway connecting the Port of Djibouti and the Ethiopian capital, Addis Ababa.
- 1934 The French successfully constructed road and rail networks in the French Somaliland. Now Djibouti as a port also becomes an important economic hub in the Red Sea.
- 1935-36 France and Italy enter into a bloody clash on French and Italian Somalilands. The wars mostly took place on the border regions of modern Somalia and Djibouti. As the World War II erupted, the French did lose quite a number of territories in the region.
- 1942 France under the Free French Forces managed to occupy the territories that have been under blockade by Italy and Germany, and they now occupied Djibouti, and re-established their presence in the territory under the so called French Vichy government.
- 1944 French Somaliland sent forces to help in the struggle for the liberation of France from occupying Axis army.
- 1945 Ethiopia and French Somaliland renew their agreements, and so, their borders were now again acknowledged.
- 1947 Local nationalist feeling was nurtured by the Issa ethnic group who advocated for the independence of the country. On the basis of provisions of the Atlantic Charter, some Issa activists continued to campaign for the independence of French Somaliland, preferably uniting all Somalilands.
- 1949 Issa nationalists organized a significant demonstration in support of independence of all Somalilands (the British Somaliland, the Italian Somaliland and the French Somaliland).
- 1956 Despite outspoken demands for such freedom, France declares French Somaliland as its *Territoires d'outre-mer* (Overseas Territory). However, France allowed the representation of the territory and a deputy seat at the French National assembly –

Assemblée Nationale.

- 1957 French Somaliland was granted domestic self-rule – July
- 1958 The first referendum was held, and majority voted to remain as part of the French *Territoire d'Outre-Mer*. Many Issa groups who were dissatisfied with the vote and demonstrated their protests against it were detained; many were also expelled by local forces from French Somaliland. Many landed in modern-day Somalia.
- 1963 Aref Ali Bourhan from among the Afar group became the president of the Territorial Executive Council, a new arrangement of its sort. But, frustrated with political circumstances, he resigned from office and established his own party called Afar Democratic Rally.
- 1966 The UN interfered and suggested that the French Somaliland (on the basis of the Atlantic Charter) be granted independence. France rejected this proposal, and the issue of Djibouti continued to be complicated.
- 1966 Riots mounted against the French stand against the independence of French Somaliland, and so the intended visit of President General Charles de Gaulle of France was cancelled – late August.
- 1967 Second referendum for or against independence of French Somaliland took place. Majority votes were for France's presence and consideration of the territory as its "overseas territory" – March. This created mounting political tensions among ethnic groups.
- 1967 Riots mounted and resulted in the killing of a dozen of Issa members by French troops – March 20 and March 21.
- 1977 A third election took place, and majority voted for the independence of the territory which was now to be known as Djibouti (same name as the capital city). Djibouti became independent and Hassan Gouled Aptidon became the Prime Minister of the country. The country joined some continental organizations such as the Organization of African Unity (OAU).
- 1990s Through the 1990s, power struggle erupted predominantly between the People's Rally for Progress (PRP) and the Front for the Restoration of Unity and Democracy.
- 1996 Military clashes took place with Eritrea.
- 1999 President Hassan Gouled Aptidon announced retirement and was replaced by

President Ismail Omar Gulleh – he won the two elections afterwards – in 2005 and 2008.

- 2000 Power struggles, wars and tensions formally ended with an agreement to share power between these parties.
- 2000s PRP, enjoying the support of the Somali Issa clans (such as predominantly the Isaaq) dominated the political environment of the country.
- 2005 State elections were conducted and the PRP came out as a dominant party
- 2008 Last elections were held in which PRP continued to dominate results. This makes Djibouti as one of the countries run mostly by a single party. Djibouti clashed with Eritrea, and presented bitterness against Eritrea in the UN.

Eritrea

- 1832–1842 The Egyptian forces raided Eritrea with an aim of expanding their influence to the whole Horn of Africa.
- 1846 The Egyptian forces made some progress and occupied the port city of Massawa. They also consolidated their power in the Eritrean lowlands.
- 1868 Abyssinian (modern-day Ethiopia) detained some British diplomats and missionaries, and the British monarchy launched the Lord Napier Expedition against Emperor Tewodros of Ethiopia. The British expeditionary force passes through Eritrea. They constructed short-distance rails and roads. They raided Tewodros's positions and compelled the emperor to commit suicide.
- 1869 A marking point for the consolidation of colonial interests takes place when the Suez Canal was opened – connecting the Mediterranean Sea, the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean – Nov. 17. Italian agents in Eritrea, through a shipping company called *Società di Navigazione Rubattino*, engaged in Italian colonial interests in the region, and so an Italian priest, Fr. Giuseppe Sapeto purchased a piece of land in Assab.
- 1875 The Egyptian forces in Eritrea attempted further expansion and a battle, the Battle of Gundet, was fought between the Egyptian and Abyssinian army. The Egyptian army faced complete defeat.
- 1876 The second Egyptian invasion of the Eritrean highlands faces another complete

- defeat by forces of Yohannes IV of Ethiopia at the Battle of Gura'e.
- 1881 Mahdist Rebellion took place in Sudan affecting affairs of the Horn of Africa. Mahdists confronted Abyssinian army in Matama, and the Emperor of Abyssinia – Yohannes IV was killed in that battle (1889). The Italians in the coasts of the Eritrean Red Sea started further expansion in Eritrea.
- 1885 The major Eritrean port town of Massawa was occupied by the Italians.
- 1887 A renowned Abyssinian commander in chief in Eritrea achieved a major success in defeating the Italians at the Battle of Dog'ali.
- 1888-1892 A severe famine devastated populations of the Horn: especially Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, and other parts of East Africa.
- 1890 Italy declared Eritrea as its first colony in Africa – the name “Eritrea” (a version of ancient Greek version of “*Erythraía*” given to this colony by Italy – January 1.
- 1896 Italy attempted to expand its forces towards mainland of Ethiopia, but faced a major defeat by local forces in colonial history at the Battle of Adowa.
- 1897 Asmara became the capital city of Eritrea. Previously, Massawa served that purpose. Ferdinando Martini became the governor of the colony.
- 1911 The two major cities in the colony – Massawa and Asmara were connected by railway.
- 1928 Railroad construction successfully connected Asmara and Keren and finally Akordat (other two important towns in the northern part of the colony).
- 1931-1935 Mussolini's ambition of establishing an African Italian Empire (Africa Orientale Italiana) officially started with the expansion of expansion of road and rail construction in Eritrea, import of personnel and arms to Eritrea and the invasion of Ethiopia. To this point, Eritrea was seen as a base for further ambitious expansion of Italy towards many parts of the Horn of Africa.
- 1936 Italian army successfully occupied Ethiopia – practiced gross violation of human rights. Local resistance forces such as “the Patriots” kept the Italian army intact through the World War II.
- 1941 Italy suffered from a major military defeat by the British forces at various battles in Eritrea, Ethiopia, and Somalia. Ethiopia regained its independence.
- 1941 Mahber Fekri Hager “Society for Country's Love”, one of the major Eritrean

- political parties, was founded in the Capital – on May 5.
- The *Wa'ella* Bet Giorgis (Convention of Bet Giorgis) took place in Asmara.
- Political frictions erupted during the convention.
- 1947 Undecided on the future of Eritrea, the UN sent the so called Four Powers Commission to study and come with a conclusion about the issue – to no avail – no final decision was reached.
- 1950 UN passed a resolution commonly referred as 390A(V) which federated Eritrea with Ethiopia.
- 1952 The Federal Constitution, drafted by a UN representative (Mr. Anze Matienzo) was implemented – September. Mr. Tedla Bairu became the first President of the Eritrean Federal government.
- 1955 Tedla Bairu was replaced by Asfaha Woldemichael (an advocate of Eritrean union with Ethiopia).
- 1958 The Eritrean Liberation Movement (ELM) was founded. Also Student strike in Asmara demonstrated against the Ethiopian acts of intrusion, but the strikes were suppressed.
- 1960 The Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF) also commonly known as Jebha was founded in Cairo, and it considered military option as a means to achieve Eritrean independence.
- 1961 Eritrean armed struggle for independence officially started – Sept. 1.
- 1962 Ethiopia officially annexed Eritrea as part of its territory, annulled autonomous principles as provided by the UN between the two countries – Nov.
- 1968 The ELF was weakened by internal rivalries. A convention commonly known as the *waela Aredayib* “Aredayib Convention” was called in which a number of the ranks of the ELF demonstrated discontent against the organization. Reformists challenged the organization that it had to send its leadership to the Eritrean field, and that the army be restructured.
- 1974 Ethiopian monarchy was overthrown and replaced by a communist military junta commonly known as Dergue – Sept.
- 1977 The Eritrean People’s Liberation Front (EPLF) already splintered from ELF in the early 1970s, organized its first congress and demonstrated that it was the only

- dominant military power fighting against Ethiopian occupation of Eritrea
- 1991 EPLF won independence through military; established a transitional government
- 1993 Eritrea conducted a popular referendum (for or against independence) and great majority voted for independence – Eritrean became formally an independent state.
- 1994 The EPLF formally announced at its Third Congress in Nakfa –Feb. that it changed its name to People’s Front for Democracy and Justice (PFDJ) and introduced a national charter. It became the only ruling political party in the country.
- 1998 Border war broke out between Eritrea and Ethiopia in which over 200,000 people died in both sides. Hundreds of thousands were also displaced.
- 2000 Ethiopia and Eritrea agreed to resolve their border wars under internationally organized court of arbitration – December.
- 2001 Eritrea’s ruling elite detained Eritrea’s high-ranking officials commonly known as G-15. They demanded reform within the government. Eritrea also cracked down major private journalists – September. None of all these detainees has been brought to any court of justice to this day (Aug. 2013).
- 2009 The UN passed Resolution 1907 imposing targeted sanctions against the ruling elite for supporting radical Islamist groups in Somalia.

Ethiopia

- 1855 Emperor Tewodros emerged as the King of Kings of Ethiopia from the troubled era in Ethiopia, called *zemene mesafint* “the Era of Princes”
- 1868 Diplomatic relations with the British Monarchy deteriorated; Emperor Tewodros detained British consul and missionaries. England sends an army led by Lord Napier to defeat Emperor Tewodros. The Abyssinian army was defeated and the Emperor committed suicide. His son, Alemayehu (aged 7, heir of the Throne) was forcibly taken to England where he died at the age of 18.
- 1872 Emperor Yohannes IV was crowned as the King of Kings of Ethiopia
- 1875 Emperor Yohannes IV defeated Egyptian expansionist army in Eritrea – the Battle of Gundet
- 1876 Emperor Yohannes IV defeated Egyptian expansionist army in Eritrea – the Battle of

Gura'e

- 1887 Italian expansionist army faced major defeat by the army of Yohannes IV at the Battle of Dog'ali
- 1889 Mahdist forces from Sudan invaded Abyssinia, and Emperor Yohannes IV was killed at the Battle of Matama. King of Shoa, King Menelik replaced Yohannes IV and was crowned as the Emperor of the country (as Menelik II). The Capital of the country was moved to Addis Ababa.
- 1896 Italian colonial invasion took place. Italian army suffered major defeat at the Battle of Adowa – March.
- 1913 Emperor Menelik II died of illness: Lij Iyassu was designated as a heir of the Throne by Empress Taytu. However, Lij Iyasu had converted himself to Islam and his smooth succession of power in the monarchy failed.
- 1916 Empress Zawditu became the emperor of Ethiopia as an official successor of Emperor Menelik II – Ras Tafari Mekonnen became the Crowned Prince and Regent.
- 1923 Ethiopia admitted to become as an independent member of the League of Nations.
- 1930 Zawditu died and she was succeeded by Ras Tafari Mekonnen (Crowned as Haile Selassie I, King of Kings of Ethiopia).
- 1935 Italy (under Mussolini) invaded Ethiopia and occupied the capital the following year.
- 1941 Commonwealth and British troops defeated Italian army in the Horn, and Ethiopia regained its independence.
- 1952 UN supervised federal arrangement between Eritrea and Ethiopia was implemented.
- 1962 Eritrea was annexed by Ethiopia as its 14th Province.
- 1963 Ethiopia hosted the first conference of the OAU.
- 1974 Emperor Haile Selassie was deposed by a military junta (Dergue)
- 1977 Mengistu Haile Mariam emerged out of the ranks of the Dergue and became ruler of the country – made Ethiopia side with the Communist Block. Ethiopia was also confronted by Somali forces in the disputed region of Ogaden.
- 1979 Military turmoil in the country was accompanied by the so called “Red Terror”

- during which thousands of people were killed across the country.
- 1984/85 Ethiopia was hit by a major famine. Millions of people were affected.
 - 1988 Ethiopia and Somalia signed a peace treaty ending their decades-long military rivalry
 - 1991 The Tigrean People's Liberation Front (TPLF) defeated the Dergue army and occupied Ethiopia. A new government was established.
 - 1994 Ethiopia adopted a new constitution. The federal constitution divided the country along ethnic and regional affiliations.
 - 1995 Mr. Meles Zenawi officially became the Prime Minister of Ethiopia and Mr. Negasso Gidada became the titular President of the country.
 - 1998 Border war between Ethiopia and Eritrea erupted. Hundreds of thousands of soldiers were killed on both sides.
 - 2000 Ethiopia and Eritrea agreed to resolve their border wars under internationally organized court of arbitration – December. The Eritrea-Ethiopia Boundary Commission (under the Permanent Court of Arbitration at Hague) was established to provide a verdict on the disputed areas.
 - 2004 Ethnic clashes erupted in the Gambella region where about 190 people were killed.
 - 2005 Multi-party elections took place. The ruling party under Mr. Meles Zenawi declared winner – May. But disputes over issues of the election erupted leading to violent demonstrations in the country.
 - 2006 Ethiopian troops entered Somalia to fight Islamist forces such as mainly al-Shabab. Ethiopia controlled most parts of Somalia.
 - 2009 Ethiopia formally withdrew from Somalia.
 - 2011 Drought affected millions of people in the country. Many refugees from Somalia and other countries were also badly affected.

Somalia

- 1840 The British East India Company signed treaty with the Somali Sultan of Tajura. The treaty enabled the company to have unrestricted trading rights.
- 1887 Britain claimed protectorate over British Somaliland. It signed agreements with

- France specifying their respective claimed territories – French and British Somalilands 1887/1888.
- 1889 Italy claimed a protectorate in Somalia – it came to be known as Italian Somaliland – its possessions further consolidated by the agreements in 1925.
- 1908 Italy formally claimed that the Italian Somaliland was to be administered as its colony in a form of direct administration.
- 1936 Italian invasion of Ethiopia brought about the unification of Italian Somaliland with that of Ethiopia – in an agenda of forming Italian African Empire.
- 1940 As part of the World War II, Italian troops occupied the British Somaliland – making the empire even bigger.
- 1941 Italian troops in Somalia, Ethiopia and Eritrea were defeated by Commonwealth and British army.
- 1941 The U.N. General Assembly adopted a resolution that made the Italian Somaliland a U.N. trust territory, but still under Italian administrative control.
- 1960 British and Italian Somaliland merged and gained independence. The new merger formed the United Republic of Somalia.
- 1969 The democratically elected president of Somalia, Abdi Rashid Ali Shermarke was assassinated and Mohamed Said Barre came to power through a coup.
- 1970 Somalia formally became a communist state.
- 1974 Somalia joined the Arab League. The Government of Somalia signed a formal treaty of friendship with the Soviet Union, making Somalia a member of the Communist Block.
- 1977 Major war with Ethiopia was fought on territorial claims of the Ogaden region.
- 1978 Ethiopia formed a more solid relationship with the Soviet Union. It acquired flowing military aid from the Soviets.
- 1978/89 Frustrated by the Soviet massive support for Ethiopia, Somalia established and nurtured cordial relationship with the US.
- 1991 President Siad Barre was ousted from power and a new chapter of clan-based struggle for power started. Somali warlords, especially a struggle between Mohamed Farah Aideed and Ali M. Mohamed continued to affect every economic and social arteries of Somalia. Many thousands of civilians were killed

or wounded during the power struggle. The former British Somaliland territory declared its cessation from the rest of the country. The unilateral declaration of independence of the former British Somaliland was rejected by other territories, and so, political and military turmoil continued.

- 1992 The US deployed an army of marines. The UN also deployed peacekeeping mission to Somalia.
- 1995 The UN mission to Somalia failed and the UN army left the country.
- 1996 Hassan Aideed replaced his father who died of wounds he sustained during the turbulent political circumstances in the country - August.
- 1998 Puntland, one of the major territories in the country declared its autonomy.
- 2000 Abdulkassim Salat Hassan was elected by Somali clans as the President of the country.
- 2001 The transitional government failed to attain unity of the country.
- 2004 A new president, Abdullahi Yussuf, was elected the president of the country – December. Inauguration of the election was held in Nairobi, Kenya.
- 2006 The Union of Islamic Courts controlled Mogadishu and other parts of Southern Somalia.
- 2007 Military turmoil among government and other forces in the country continued, and the African Union deployed peacekeeping forces to Somalia. Prime Minister Ghedi resigned and was succeeded by Nur Hassan Hussein.
- 2008 Piracy along the coasts of Somalia affects international maritime commerce. The UN allowed international warships to be deployed in the region.
- 2009 Ethiopia completely withdrew its forces from Somalia. Islamist insurgents, especially the al-Shabab became powerful and advanced on Mogadishu and other territories of the country.
- 2010/12 Famine affected the country badly and over 230,000 people were killed by the famine.

South Sudan

1899-1955 South Sudan became part of the Anglo-Egyptian rule.

- 1956 Sudan became independent and South Sudan remained part of Sudan.
- 1962 Anya Nya movement for liberation of South Sudan began – a civil war erupts within the overall region led by the separatists and the government in Khartoum.
- 1969 Military coup took place led by Jaefar Muhammad Nimeri.
- 1972 Nimeri signed an agreement with the South Sudanese liberation army in the Ethiopian city of Addis Ababa. He agreed on the right for autonomy of South Sudan.
- 1978 Major oil fields were discovered in South Sudan, making a smooth transition to self-rule much complicated.
- 1983 John Garang, took power in the South Sudanese liberation army called Sudanese People's Liberation Movement (SPLM); Nimeri annulled the former agreement; war resumed between Sudan and South Sudan. Sudan suffered from massive economic recession – inflation rate was so high.
- 1985 Nimeri was ousted from power in Sudan and was replaced by Prime Minister Sadiq al-Mahdi. He went to exile in Egypt where he lived until 1999 and then returned to Sudan to run as a candidate in the national elections. He did not get enough votes. He died in 2009 of a natural cause.
- 1989 Al-Mahdi was ousted from power through a military coup led by Omar Hassan al-Bashir (current President of Sudan) – June.
- 2002 SPLA signed agreement for a peaceful resolution of the war with Sudan. The process for a peaceful resolution of the conflict started in the same year.
- 2005 SPLA and Sudan under the presidency of Omar al-Bashir signed a major agreement commonly known as Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) which formally ended the war between South Sudan and Sudan. Among other things, the agreement enabled South Sudan to have autonomy – January. Dr. John Garang of the SPLA was sworn as vice President of Sudan, and amiable relations started between SPLA and Sudan – July. But the South Sudanese leader, Dr. John Garang was killed in a plane crash causing political turmoil in Sudan – August. He was replaced by Salva Kiir Mayardiit. Autonomous government (on laid principles of power sharing) was founded in South Sudan – October.
- 2008 Tensions resulted in outright fighting between forces in South Sudan and Sudan

over an oil rich territory called Abiyei – May.

- 2009 Leaders in the South and North agreed on terms of referendum in South Sudan – for or against full independence of South Sudan - December.
- 2011 Referendum was held in South Sudan, and great majority of South Sudanese voted for independence – January. Kiir became the first president of independent South Sudan.
- 2012 South Sudan declared a disaster in one of its significant territories called Jonglei State. Over 100,000 people were displaced from the region because of tense ethnic rivalries – January.
- 2013 President Kiir dismissed the whole cabinet and Vice-President Riek Machar accusing them of power struggle within the governing party called People's Liberation Movement – July.

Sudan

- 1881 Mahdist forces organized a revolt against the joint Egyptian-Turkish rule.
- 1899-1955 South Sudan became part of the Anglo-Egyptian rule.
- 1956 Sudan became independent.
- 1958 An Islamist militant group led by general Abboud came to power.
- 1962 Anya Nya movement for liberation of South Sudan began – a civil war erupts within the overall region led by the separatists and the government in Khartoum.
- 1964 The so-called “October Revolution” took place and general Abboud was overthrown. Islamist forces established a government in Sudan.
- 1969 Military coup took place led by Jaefar Muhammad Nimeri.
- 1971 Nimeri executed a number of political figures whom he accused of organizing conspiracy for a coup against his government.
- 1972 Nimeri signed an agreement with the South Sudanese liberation army in the Ethiopian city of Addis Ababa. He agreed on the right for autonomy of South Sudan.
- 1978 Major oil fields were discovered in South Sudan, making a smooth transition to self-rule much complicated.

- 1983 John Garang, took power in the South Sudanese liberation army called Sudanese People's Liberation Movement (SPLM); Nimeri annulled the former agreement; war resumed between Sudan and South Sudan. Sudan suffered from massive economic recession – inflation rate was so high. Sudan imposed an Islamic law.
- 1985 Nimeri was ousted from power in Sudan and was replaced by Prime Minister Sadiq al-Mahdi. He went to exile in Egypt where he lived until 1999 and then returned to Sudan to run as a candidate in the national elections. He did not get enough votes. He died in 2009 of a natural cause. A transitional Military Council was established in the country.
- 1986 A coalition government was established with Sadiq al-Mahdi as its Prime Minister.
- 1988 Ceasefire agreements were suggested by the same government with South Sudan's liberation army. But it did not materialize.
- 1989 Al-Mahdi was ousted from power through a military coup led by a group called National Salvation Revolution led by Omar Hassan al-Bashir (current President of Sudan) – June.
- 1998 The US suspected Sudan for making chemical weapons: alleged that it was cooperating with members of the Al Qaeda terrorists, and so, it launched missile attack on a pharmaceutical plant in Khartoum a great deal of oil. Some Chinese companies became involved in oil extraction and export. New constitution of the country was implemented after a popular referendum.
- 2000 Al-Turabi, one of the most renowned Islamist politicians of the al-Bashir government made unilateral agreements with rebels in South Sudan. He was detained immediately after the agreement was signed. He was then released in 2003 after serving three years detention. But then again detained in 2004 for alleged plots of coup against al-Bashir's government. The US also imposed unilateral sanctions against the government in Sudan.
- 2002 SPLA signed agreement for a peaceful resolution of the war with Sudan. The process for a peaceful resolution of the conflict started in the same year.
- 2004 Sudanese army was deployed in Darfur region to crush a rebel; massive human rights violations took place leading to the displacement of hundreds of thousands

- of civilians from Darfur. Many landed in refugee camps in Chad.
- 2005 SPLA and Sudan under the presidency of Omar al-Bashir signed a major agreement commonly known as Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) which formally ended the war between South Sudan and Sudan. Among other things, the agreement enabled South Sudan to have autonomy – January. Dr. John Garang of the SPLA was sworn as vice President of Sudan, and amiable relations started between SPLA and Sudan – July. But the South Sudanese leader, Dr. John Garang was killed in a plane crash causing political turmoil in Sudan – August. He was replaced by Salva Kiir Mayardit. Autonomous government (on laid principles of power sharing) was founded in South Sudan – October. UN Security Council authorized sanctions against government officials and other actors who violated ceasefire in Darfur. Council also voted to refer those accused of war crimes in Darfur to International Criminal Court.
- 2007 International Criminal Court issued arrest warrants for a minister and a Janjaweed militia leader suspected of Darfur war crimes.
- 2008 Tensions resulted in outright fighting between forces in South Sudan and Sudan over an oil rich territory called Abiyei – May.
- 2009 Leaders in the South and North agreed on terms of referendum in South Sudan – for or against full independence of South Sudan - December. The International Criminal Court in The Hague issued an arrest warrant for President Bashir on charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity in Darfur.
- 2010 International Criminal Court issued second arrest warrant for President al-Bashir – claiming that he committed crimes in a context which the UN called was a genocide.
- 2011 Referendum was held in South Sudan, and great majority of South Sudanese voted for independence – January. Kiir became the first president of independent South Sudan.

LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS

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Magnus Treiber

Magnus Treiber received his doctorate in Anthropology from Munich University in 2005. His doctoral research focused on life-worlds and milieus of Asmara's urban youth. As most of his friends subsequently left Eritrea and became refugees and migrants, his research interest has since moved to the study of migration from the Horn of Africa. Respective articles have been published in David O'Kane and Tricia R. Hepner (eds), *Biopolitics, Militarism and Development: Eritrea in the Twenty-First Century* (2009) and in Alessandro Triulzi and Robert McKenzie (eds), *Long Journeys: African Migrants on the Road* (2013). At the time of writing, Magnus Treiber was teaching at Bayreuth University in Germany.

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The Horn of Africa at the Brink of the 21st Century: Coping with Fragmentation, Isolation and Marginalization in a Globalizing Environment.

Edited by Daniel R. Mekonnen and Mussie Tesfagiorgis

This volume is a collection of papers by different authors, six of which were initially presented in two different panels of the Fourth European Conference on African Studies (ECAS4) that took place in Uppsala, Sweden, from 15 to 18 June 2011. There is one additional chapter by Bethlehem Daniel, which was not presented in none of the two conferences. The overall theme of ECAS4, which is still available from the conference website, was “African Engagements: On Whose Terms?”

Six of the core chapters in this volume were presented in Panel 50 and Panel 102 of ECAS4. Panel 50 was co-chaired by Hartmut Quehl and Günter Schröder. Its theme was “The Horn of Africa at the Brink of the 21st Century: Coping With Fragmentation, Isolation and Marginalisation in a Globalising Environment.” Panel 102 was co-chaired by Hartmut Quehl and Mussie Tesfagiorgis. Its theme was “Eritrea: A Country Losing its People.” This volume contains three papers from each panel.

The aim of this volume is to provide a general introduction to and a contextual background of the Horn of Africa region in terms of the dire state of human security and human development in the region - these being two of the most important concepts for this volume.

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