

Original Article

The Horn of Africa: Some Explanations for Poverty and Conflicts

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Abstract

The term “Horn of Africa” is not only a geographical expression but it is rather a geopolitical concept. The Horn of Africa proper consists of Ethiopia, Eritrea, Djibouti, Somalia, the Sudan and South Sudan. Stretchily, it also encompasses Kenya and Uganda. Some are convinced that the nations of the Horn of Africa are endowed with a dynamic, youthful and entrepreneurial population and an abundance of natural resources. Yet, for too many years, peoples of this region have been suffering from hunger, conflicts, poverty and growing inequalities and instabilities. The twin problems of poverty and conflict have various and complex causes that could be put under categories such as domestic/national, regional and international causes. Methodologically, this paper is based on the analysis of secondary sources. Unlike most previous works, this article analyzes, in a quasi-comparative approach, the domestic, regional and international factors responsible for the region’s poverty and conflicts.

Keywords: *Horn of Africa, poverty, conflict causes, colonialism, post-independence*

Introduction

The term “Horn of Africa” is not only a geographical expression; it is rather a geopolitical concept. Its extent is therefore fluid and depends on the geopolitics of the region. The proper Horn of Africa consists of Ethiopia, Eritrea, Djibouti, Somalia, the Sudan, and South Sudan. Stretchily, it sometimes also encompasses Kenya and Uganda (“Greater Horn”). In its international relations and diplomatic interactions, the Horn of Africa has established close ties with the Middle East, particularly with Egypt and Yemen. For this particular article, the Horn of Africa refers to Ethiopia, Eritrea, Djibouti, Somalia, the Sudan, and South Sudan.

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By 2008, the population of the “Greater” Horn of Africa was more than 213 million. On average of 79% of the population of the region is engaged in agriculture and 21% in the industry (World Bank, 2009). The Horn² proper (Ethiopia, Eritrea, Djibouti, Somalia and the Sudan and the South Sudan) is the home of over 176 million people³ of diversified ethnic composition and religion. The Horn is the least developed⁴ and stable⁵ region of the world. The region witnessed internal conflicts in Somalia, the Sudan, Kenya; inter-state war between Ethiopia and Eritrea; cross-border armed group movement in Djibouti and food insecurity⁶ in almost all the countries (Getachew, 2009).

Most literature on the Horn of Africa lacks a comprehensive analysis of the causes of poverty⁷ and conflict⁸ in the region. This is the task taken up in this paper. A brief recommendation is also part of this article.

The Context

Some are convinced that the Horn of Africa is endowed with a dynamic, youthful and entrepreneurial population and an abundance of natural resources. Yet, for too many years, the people of this region have been suffering from hunger, conflicts, poverty and growing inequalities and instabilities. In spite of some sectoral and national endeavours, the the Horn is one of the poorest regions in the world (UNDP: <http://hdr.undp.org/en/statistics/>).

² The six states of the Horn cover an area of about 4,968,000 km², Kenya is also included here (Brook, 2010).

³ Around 40% of the population of the region is under 15 years of age.

⁴ The region’s GDP, Somalia excluded, was only USD 92 billion and the average per capital GDP was USD 677 in 2007. Comparably, in the same year the GDP of Canada was \$1,478 billion and its average per capital GDP was \$38,000 and Korean GDP is USD 965 billion and its average per capital GDP is USD 24,000.

⁵ The region of the Horn entertained over 2 million internally displaced persons, over 600,000 refugees, and over 3 million people left the Horn for the outside world.

⁶ In 2007, 1.36 million Ethiopians, 2.8 million Sudanese, 1.53 million Somalis, 246,000 Kenyans, and 2 million Eritreans needed immediate food aid.

⁷ The concept of poverty is complex. It goes beyond the economic needs and includes, inter alia, social, political and cultural issues, sometimes referred to as the “lack of human needs” that constitutes both biological and psychological needs of persons. Lack of human needs eventually may lead to reactions that will result in conflict (Ikejiaku, 2009).

⁸ Conflict refers to four major aspects of confrontations: wars of secession, civil wars for socio-economic and political matters, internal instability or crises, and inter-state wars.



Figure 1: Eastern Horn of Africa

Map 1: Greater Horn of Africa (Source: Woodward, 1996)

Forced migration, inter- and intra-state conflicts, environmental degradation, disenfranchised communities, poverty, unstable livelihood, high population growth and importance of youth, recurrent climate shock, conflicts over resources as well as steady humanitarian crisis are the major and complex features explaining the situation. Most of the states of the region rank amongst the countries with low human development (Ethiopia ranks 157th, Sudan 154th, Djibouti 147th; IGAD, 2011).

Natural hazards have always been with the region; it remains the epicentre of famine; a situation which is exacerbated by environmental degradation and the unequal competition of globalization. The Horn of Africa is the most armed and braindrain-stricken region in the world (SALW Proliferation Pressures).

More than 800,000 refugees and more than 3 million internally displaced people live in the region (<http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49e45a846.htm>). The regional instability has led people to forced migration. People, driven by economic mirage, migrate outside the region and

contribute to further instability, notably by using illegal channels of human trafficking. Moreover, illegal human traffickers from Ethiopia and other countries, who consider the country as a kind of no-man's land, used the conflict in Somalia to cross to Yemen. The situation in Somalia also increased the terrorist activities in the region and globally and exacerbated wider insecurity (Rena, 2007 and <http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49e45a846.htm>).

The pastoralist population, the poorest and most vulnerable population of the region, amounts to numbers between 15 and 18 million. This is. The economic problem of the pastoralists has been exacerbated by insecurity and the poor veterinary services that have caused the wide spread of livestock disease (Duncan and Howell, 1992).

However, "post-colonial" Africa in general has witnessed some socio-economic improvements. African life expectancy, infant mortality, and literacy rates increased during the period until the mid-1970s. This gave way to high population increase being over 3% in some countries. Since then, however, the socio-economic prospects either slowed down or stagnated. In Africa, the late 1970s and early 1980s marked a watershed. Since this time, the whole of Africa has been in a socio-economic and political crisis. The crisis is characterized by famine, migration, displacement, ecological stress, falling or stagnation of foreign exchange, political instability etc. The socio-economic crisis has exposed Africa to an escalating external debt and dependency on foreign aid (Duncan and Howell, 1992). Estimates of causalities resulting from the post-independence atrocious inter- and intra-state conflicts are astonishingly high.

Djibouti experienced atrocious civil war between 1991 and 1994. It was fought between the Somali-dominated government and the minority Afar population (35-40%), who established the Front for the Restoration of Unity and Democracy [FRUD] (Kalib, 2007).

Table 1: Estimates⁹ of casualties of conflicts and wars in the Horn of Africa

Country	Case	Year	Casualties	
			Dead	Displaced
Sudan	North-South conflict	1955-1972	500,000	
	North-South civil war	1983-2005	2,000,000	42,000 refugees 4 million displaced
	Darfur conflict	-	180,000- 3000,000	no data
Eritrea	War of Independence	1961-1991	50,000	no data
Ethiopia	various conflicts	1961-1992	1.4 million	no data
	Ethio-Eritrean war	1998-2000	70,000- 120,000	hundreds of thousands
	conflicts in the Ogaden	1996-1998	31,000	
Somalia	civil war	Since 1991	300,000- 400,000	1.4 million
Uganda	conflict with Buganda	1966	2,000	no data
	Idi Amin Rule	1972-1979	300,00	no data
	civil war	1979-1986	300,000	75,000
	war against LRA (Lord Resistance Army)	1987	2,000- 5,000	no data
Kenya	post-election violence	2007	1,300	no data

Source: Compiled from Kidane, 2011

⁹ No doubt the various local small and large scale inter-community conflicts and government driven massacre, disappearances, continue to add to the total estimates of dead and displacements.

The number of refugees in the region is also exponentially high. This has made the Horn of Africa one of the largest sources of refugees in the world. In 2008, the number of refugees from the Horn of Africa has been over 1 million. Over 8.5 million are internally displaced (World Bank, 2008; UNDP, 2008). International and regional human right organizations accuse most of the governments of the region for violating human rights (including disappearance of citizens, torture, incarceration without due process of law, intimidation etc.).

The economic repercussions of conflicts are also likely to be damaging and high. Conflicts and wars are logically followed by massive destruction of property and infrastructure and profound socio-economic disruption, which is an obstacle for the socio-economic development and progress of the region (Mwaura, Baccler and Kiplagat, 2002). There is no actually comprehensive data on the economic and social cost of these conflicts and wars. The fragmented data, however, indicates the trend. The estimate of the Ethio-Eritrean war of 1998-2000 has been over 4 billion dollar for Ethiopia and Eritrea. The war in Uganda, from 1986 to 2002, cost 1.33 billion (Kidane, 2011). For a region and countries suffering from poverty, this amount of money is huge.

The root causes of the socio-economic and political problems of Africa in general and the Horn of Africa in particular lay on interlinked international and domestic factors. Colonialism has left Africa with undiversified economic systems. This has incapacitated the region to adapt to new adverse external conditions. The colonial boundary heritage is another source of instability particularly in the region of the Horn of Africa. Internally, most African countries do not have a functioning policy and a system that may enable them to alleviate unexpected climatic shocks before troubling the economic environment. The political climate also has continued to be hostile to the socio-economic prospects (Duncan and Howell, 1992).

Both the internal and external problems that disrupted the African socio-economic prospect invited the so-called structural adjustment. Structural adjustment includes such short-term stabilization and long-term adjustment

measures as:

“Stabilization measures are primarily designed to reduce short-term imbalances between supply and demand which normally manifest themselves in balance-of-payment and budget deficits. The main instruments are designed to achieve reduction in aggregate demand through reducing public sector expenditure, raising taxes and charges, increasing interest rates, and devaluating the currency. Structural adjustment measures are designed to address a wider range of obstacles to growth, many of them limiting the ability of the economy to increase supplies”(Duncan and Howell, 1992).

This program has been offered by foreign aid providers, the so-called partners and technical experts to Africa. However, it ended up with further socio-economic and political complication.

For decades, the Horn of Africa has been entangled in conflicts. The most devastating wars in the Horn have been the 30-years Ethio-Eritrean war, the war fought between irredentist Somalia and Ethiopia, and the internal conflicts in the Sudan (Kalib, 2007). There were more than 29 intra-state conflicts and wars in the Horn of Africa between 1961 and 2006.

Table 2: Number of intra-state conflicts

Country	Year	Number of conflicts
Djibouti	1991	1
Eritrea	1993-1998	3
Ethiopia	1961-1998	7
Somalia	1979-2006	6
Sudan	1958-2003	6
Uganda	1981-1987	2
Total		25

Source: compiled from Berouk, 2010

The region of the Horn witnessed many inter-state tensions and wars. The Ethio-Somalia war of 1964 and 1977-1978, the Ethio-Eritrea war of 1998-2000, the Sudan-Eritrea contention of 1994-1998, the Sudan-Ethiopia tension of 1995-1998, and the Kenya-Uganda tension of 2009 are some of the inter-state confrontations in the region (Berouk, 2010).

As a result of poverty and conflicts, all of the countries of the Horn of Africa are in the list of Least Developed Countries¹⁰. “Illiteracy, poverty, susceptibility of disease and vulnerability to attack of mass genocide are rampant in Africa in highest rates”(Salh, 2006). The average rate of growth and development in Africa is about 2.5%, whereas such rates vary between 4.5% and 6% in other countries outside Africa. When it comes to individual countries, the rate could be lower than 2.5% (Salh, 2006). The region is also suffering from braindrain and diminishing labour force due to the endless conflicts and wars.

Factor Anatomy

The twin problems of poverty and conflict have various and complex causes that could be categorized into domestic/national, regional and international ones. Ikejiaku (2009) is convinced that the major cause for the African poverty and conflicts is internal “political corruption” in addition to regional and international factors that have triggered conflicts and exacerbating poverty in Africa.

In the faces of present crises in Africa, the flaws underlying both modernization and democratization theories and the theory of colonialism are being exposed. The long held notion that modernity would result in smooth transition from authoritarian system to democratic system, with gradual elimination of conflict has failed woefully in Africa. Again, the view that colonialism... ,the theory that the end of social, political and economic control of the developing countries by the advanced capitalist nations, particularly the colonialists, would lead to peaceful African states did not stand, as Africa has been besieged with plethora of conflicts since the end of colonialism (Ikejiaku, 2009).

¹⁰ Of the 43 Least Developed Countries of the world, 24 are found in Africa and almost all states of the Horn of Africa are in the list (Salh, 2006).

Domestic/National factors

It is important to appreciate that the people of the Horn particularly the political elites and the intellectuals have failed to avert and block external factors. The political elites have used the colonial legacy and the post-colonial influences as a scapegoat from internal and domestic problems. The political elite has failed to establish a generation free from a colonialist mind setup and to start a new history. It is undeniable, with the introduction of leitmotifs of colonialism that the traditional socio-economic, political and cultural systems of the Horn of Africa had been seriously affected. The repercussion of colonialism on the internal socio-economic and political development has become more sensible in the post-independence period (Novati, 2009).

Africans have made use of a disparate collection of knowledge “borrowed prêt a porter tools” that posits Africa as “tabula rasa” (Mennasemay, 2005). This un-indigenized practices and beliefs finally led to military coups and authoritarian rule that has resulted in political instability.

With independence soon afterwards, a pattern of power distribution was established in the post-colonial state that determined access to social and material resources. Since power was unevenly distributed, access to resources proved inequitable. Because the state controlled the production and distribution of resources, competition for them was waged in the political realm, making the state the focus of social conflict. To failure of the state to satisfy the expectations fostered by nationalism of development and democracy, discredited the ideology and undermined postcolonial regimes. [...] The struggle is carried on under many banners, democratization being one, religion another. Ethnicity, however, has proved the most potent force for political mobilization by far throughout black Africa (Salih and Markakis, 1998).

African political elites, particularly ethnic elites, have been triggering conflicts that further damaged the economy of their respective country. The political elites of the Horn have instigated problems and they are unable or unwilling to curb them. This incapacitation laid down the ground for the persistent involvement of foreign powers in the socio-economic, political and even military of their countries. Their opinion has been founded on “a strenuously

defended 'moral ethnicity', which tended to isolate each community within its own cultural and linguistic bounds"(Mennasemay, 2005).

It is the elite that mobilizes and organizes the people for political and economic strife and power, for which the larger section of the population may not be entitled at the end. Alem (2007) has quoted C. Wright Mill that "All politics is the struggle for power; the ultimate kind of power is violence". This is particularly noticeable in Africa, a continent that had been offered the western political system and institutions that are partially incompatible with its history and tradition. The political elite lacks the culture of solving problems by discussion, negotiation and compromise. What happened in Ethiopia, Eritrea, Sudan and Somalia are monumental examples of such a scenario. Ethnicity emerged as a consequence of social strife, economic deprivation and political marginalization. Ethnic conflict is not a people-to-people violence but mainly an elite-driven conflict that has a powerful capability of spreading among the masses (Al-Karsani, 2006).

For instance, there is a strong indication that the Darfur crises in the Sudan has been triggered by "power struggle between the two factions of the Sudanese Islamist Movement (SIM), the Popular Congress Party and the ruling National Congress Party"(Adamu, 2008). In Somalia, the prevailing war is basically rooted in the short-lived statehood experiences of the Somali. The failure of both the British and the Italians, who colonized the region, to establish a strong state system also contributed to the problem. However, it has been essentially prompted by the Somali elite, who struggled for power and resources by organizing the people on religious and clannish sentiments (Noviti, 2009 and Alem, 2009).

Moreover, in the Horn of Africa, political power assumes a winner-takes-it-all attitude that constitutes the wealth and resources as well as the prestige and prerogatives of office. These political elites essentially rely on ethnic/tribal/clan loyalties (Brook, 2010; Alem, 2008).

The "post-independence" period has witnessed very little economic growth in Africa. The World Bank (2005) has confirmed that the poorest region in the world is Sub-Saharan Africa with nearly half of its population earning less than one US Dollar per day. This poor economy is also suffering

from the “culture” of corruption. Corruption, above all political corruption, is another factor for poverty and conflict. The political elites have exported money in billions to their foreign bank accounts, which could have been invested in primary healthcare and education. Corrupt political and multidimensional companies, who have exacerbated the situation through self tax-exemption, have consumed foreign aid. The tax system has further paved the way for businessmen not to pay taxes or to evade tax. Some 3,000 African elites have saved, in the Swiss Bank, a total of USD 33 billion in 2008. “One high official even owned a bathtub made of a solid gold” (Ikejiaku, 2009). Most African leaders “have neither the will nor the independent power base to enforce productive priorities or discipline upon the state apparatus, thereby making poverty alleviation, peace and sustainable development far from realization in most African states” (Ikejiaku, 2009).

Uncontrolled population growth has further exacerbated the problem. A good deal of the young African population¹¹ could have been an asset to the African economy. However, connected with economic and political corruption, poor economic performance, endless conflicts, population increase has become a liability to the Africa continent. Africa is the second-largest and second most populous continent on earth with an estimated population in 2013 of 1.033 billion people. In addition, there is a high proportion of younger people within the Africa population as a whole and the life expectancy is low – less than 50 in many nations. This has reduced considerably over the course of the last twenty years with a widespread HIV/AIDS epidemic taking much of the blame for that statistic (<http://WorldpopulationReview.com>).

Regional Dimension

Statehood experiences in the region vary from country to country and “constitute an element of tension as many states fear that the presence of an opposite model in the vicinity could destabilize or bring into question their very existence”(Novati, 2009).

¹¹ African population between the age of 15 and 24 has been projected to grow from 42 million in 1950 to 354 million by 2050 (Kapur, 2008).

Regionally, there was geopolitical strife over land, water, ports, and human and natural resources. And in some ways domestic political instability extends to neighbouring states. Politically, discontented groups get shelter in a nearby country. Conflict between neighboring countries could erupt as a result of the ill determined territorial boundary and the sense of irredentism. Regional conflicts could be categorized into three, namely, (1) pastoralist mobility triggered, (2) domestic/national political instability instigated, which could be a tit-for-tat or mutual intervention, and (3) boundary disputes.

Animal husbandry is a prime activity in Somalia and the adjacent areas of Ethiopia, Kenya and Djibouti. The pastoralists of these region comprise 60-70% of the entire population (Hussien, 1998). Neighbouring states share such resources as waters of rivers. Shared resources, particularly in the Horn of Africa, are clearly reflected in the cross-border movement of pastoralists, whose traditional free movements had been significantly constrained by the formal colonial boundary framework. Political boundaries create obstacles for transhumance communities. Scarcity of water and pasture triggers conflict among pastoralist communities of neighboring countries. This economic conflict may develop into a more complex political dispute between two or more states of the region, since “there has been covert and overt interference in the affairs of neighboring states for a variety of motives” (Woodward, 1996).

The major states of the region, Ethiopia, Sudan and Somalia, all faced serious armed challenges during the 1980s to the rule of their existing regimes, which in some degree also constituted challenges to the political and geographical integrity of the existing states. These opposition movements were almost inevitably inclined to have some degree of armed action in their strategy, given the authoritarian and dictatorial regimes in these countries. But a further implication of this characteristic of the regimes is that opposition was equally inevitably driven to organize externally. To varying degrees they organized movements and set up governments in exile, organized among refugees and exiles, set up ‘sanctuaries’ and bases from which they operated across the border back into the motherland. But such activities were only possible if neighboring regimes encouraged or allowed or, at the least, were powerless to prevent them. Any support for a neighboring insurgency in turn betokened some degree of common interest in the destabilization of the neighbor (Cliffe, 1999).

For instance, diplomatic relations between Sudan and Eritrea have been contentious. Eritrea had hosted a conference for Sudanese opponent groups, including the SPLA (South Sudan Peoples' Liberation Army), on the pretext that the government of Sudan provided military training for Eritrean Islamic militants in the refugee camps in Eastern Sudan. The Eritrean leaders openly called for the overthrow of the Sudanese government in 1995 (Woodward, 1996).

The third category in the regional factor is boundary dispute. The Ethio-Somali conflict is exemplary. Ethiopia's incorporation of the Somali inhabited Ogaden, on legal and historical grounds, has brought it into conflict with the irredentist Somalia. Indeed, the post-independent Somali constitution has openly challenged the colonial borders with Ethiopia, Djibouti and Kenya (Woodward, 1996). The flag of Somalia depicts five-pointed stars to manifest the unity of all Somali disjointed in five locations: the British Somaliland, Italian Somaliland, Somalis in Ethiopia, Djibouti and Kenya.

The main agenda of the Somalian foreign policy, since the days of independence in 1960, has been the completion of the independence of all Somalis under the umbrella of Greater Somalia (Woodward, 1996). To realize this policy, the Somalian government had supplied arms for some liberation fighters in the adjoining areas of Ethiopia, who were known as Western Somali Liberation Front (WSLF), and for the Eritreans to get the support of some Arab friends. Ethiopia, on the other hand, supported opponents of Siad Barre, known as Somali National Movement (SNM) and instigated clan rivalries to weaken the Somali regime of Siad Barre (Woodward, 1996).

The Somalian-Ethiopian boundary conflict has been characterized by tensions. This had culminated into a major war in 1977-1978. The WSLF, backed by both the Barre army and the Soviets, had succeeded in 1977 to control most of the Ogaden, the Haud, and Harar; they reached up to Jijigga/Jigjigga. However, by the support of Cuban forces and the USSR, who abandoned Somalia, the Somalian advance had been halted and reverted successfully.

Ethiopia had claimed, on historical grounds, the incorporation of

Djibouti after the withdrawal of the French colonial rule. Likewise, Somalia demanded the Somali inhabited region of Djibouti. Both countries were also trying to influence France to withdraw from Djibouti. The independence of Djibouti had dashed the Ethio-Somali rivalry over Djibouti. This did not actually mitigate the Somali claim over the Somalis in Djibouti. However, the very explicit prevalence of the French¹² on the side of Djibouti prevented both, Ethiopia and Somalia, from using any force to realize their claim. The pretext of the recent Ethio-Eritrean conflict was also a boundary claim. The territorial irredentism has immense backing by human and natural resources interests.

International factors

The international or external factor could be represented by the role of foreign powers in different capacities: colonial powers, post-colonial economic partners, and ideological friends.

The Legacy of Colonialism

From the 16th century to 1921, 84 % of the earth had been under the sphere of influences of colonial powers. After World War I there were around 168 colonies (Chiriyankandath, 2007). Colonialism has “lasting geographical, financial, and cultural legacies: the remarkable persistence of colonial borders, trade and currency links, and the way in which’ the minds of many Africans continued to work on colonial assumptions” (Birmingham cit. in Chiriyankandath, 2007). Inter alia, colonialism had aborted the logical and indigenous socio-economic, cultural and political development of Africa; it left Africa with the uncontextualized Western political systems and institutions, it established arbitrary and disputing boundary demarcations, and inculcated the sense of inferiority among Africans. These developments brought Africa endless poverty and conflict. The Western colonial process has “uprooted the Africans from their traditional way of life without giving a real substitute”. The process also “distorted their view of themselves and their

¹² France has provided military support and established a strong base on Djibouti soil. The railroad and the port of Djibouti have also lessened the confrontation.

identity”(Bashier, 2006). Africans found themselves in a dilemma of being African and/or European.

Language plays a role in development. Language “affects, structures, defines, and interprets all other aspects of human life” (Okolo, 2005). One of the strategies, through which, the colonial powers destructed the African identity are to depict them as having no history and being incapable of achieving development is by the colonial languages. Colonial language, particularly the English language “embodies attitudes, referential meanings and perceptions that have greatly helped to distort the identity of the Africans” (Okolo, 2005). There are many colonial “words invented both to justify colonialism and place the African at an inferior part of the human race (Okolo, 2005).

The major colonial masters in the Horn of Africa were Italy, Great Britain and France. Italy, since its indirect control of Assab¹³ in 1869, appeared in the Horn of Africa and consequently established such colonial domains as Eritrea and Italian Somaliland. It had been from these bases that Italy tried to occupy the whole of Ethiopia in 1896 and again in 1935. Great Britain had controlled Egypt since 1882 and established the Anglo-Egyptian Condominium over the Sudan and British Somaliland¹⁴ in 1887. France ruled the tiny colony of Djibouti from 1862 to 1977. These powers formed states and signed treaties to determine the boundaries of their respective domain among themselves and with Ethiopia, the only sovereign state in the region. This boundary demarcation considered only the facilitation of the colonial administration. Hence, people of the same stock were included in different states. For example, the Somali are scattered over Southern Somalia, Somaliland, Puntland, Ethiopia, Djibouti and Kenya. This colonial

¹³ An Italian Lazarist missionary, Giuseppe Sapeto, purchased this Red Sea port from a local Sultan for 6,000 Maria Theresa dollars. The port became the property of a private Italian shipping company, the Societa Rubattino, and in 1882 was declared an Italian colony.

¹⁴ The British interest in part of the land of the Somali people had been triggered due to their possession of Aden in 1839 as a station on the short path to India. Aden was poor in local resources and the British were entirely dependent upon northern Somaliland for supplies of meat. Initially it was for the meat supply that the British occupied northern Somaliland. As part of the colonial rivalry with France, the British established a protectorate over northern Somaliland in 1887 (<http://dare.uva.nl/document/66265>).

legacy which failed to consider ethnic, cultural, historical and religious affiliations became a source of boundary conflicts (Berouk, 2010). Consequently, some people began to struggle for autonomy (Eritrea and South Sudan) and states experienced border disputes, which resulted in instability and poverty.

The other colonial legacy is economical. Economically, foreign dependent and fluctuating prices of the international commodity market, inadequate infrastructure, shortage of capital, shortage of skilled manpower, and misguided development policies affected the region. Africa, particularly the Horn of Africa, would jettison dependency on foreign financial aid and technical support only through domestic socio-economic, political and cultural development.

“Post-Independence”

Post-colonialism theory analysts have characterized the neo-colonial period “even occasionally more dangerous than what has happened previously” (Abdi, 2011). Most colonies achieved formal political independency since the mid-1960s. However, the subsequent decades witnessed that “the ghost of colonization still loomed over the post-colonial world” (Chiriyankandath, 2007). Hall (1996) states “countries are not ‘post-colonial’ in the same way does not mean that they are not ‘post-colonial’ in any way-colonization ‘refigured the terrain’ everywhere”. It is widely accepted that colonialism has transformed itself into a post-independence phase of neo-colonialism. After half a century or more, liberated developing countries are to be found which live under conditions of post-colonial dependency. In most cases, inter alia, the development path of the ex-colonies is dependent on the philosophy, institutions, systems, and languages of the colonial masters. The developing world is considered as the “perpetual consumer of modernity” (Chiriyankandath, 2007).

“The essence of neo-colonialism is that the state which is subject to it is, in theory, independent and has all the outward trappings of international sovereignty. In reality its economic system and thus its political policy is directed from outside” (Nukhruma cit. in Chiriyakandath, 2007). Actually, “colonialism in its psychological, educational, cultural, technological,

economic and political dimensions has not been cleansed from all of its former colonies and colonized spaces” (Abdi, 2011). Moreover, after the political independence, the colonial way of influence transformed itself in a more strategic way and it is “not only intact, it actually assumes the point of prominence in almost all transactions that affect the lives of the people” (Abdi, 2011). The influence has been immense.

After World War II and with the beginning of the Cold War, the Horn of Africa became the bone of contention between the USSR and the USA who fought proxy wars in the region. They provided military support to their respective satellite states in the region. As a result of the Cold War, the two superpowers initiated the second scramble for Africa in line with the ideologies of socialism or capitalism. Moreover, the change of sides of the superpowers also complicated situations. The 1974 Ethiopian revolution changed the position of the powers to the opposite side. The Soviet Union that had been a friend of Somalia but swiftly shifted its support from Somalia to Ethiopia, and played a significant role in the military defeat of its former ally, Somalia, in the Somali-Ethiopian war of 1977-78 (Patman, 1990).

Most theories of state formation and nation building failed to take into account the historical experiences African societies have made. Africa became a center of political experiments (Al-Karsani, 1996). Currently, some countries of the Horn of Africa have begun to adopt a prêt-a-porter theory of democracy without preparing fertile grounds for the cultivation of any indigenous democratic culture.

Post-independent African countries adopted borrowed “parliamentarian democracy” systems of government. The adoption of such alien systems in illiterate, poverty and conflict ridden societies is an “anathema to stable democracy” (Al-Karsani, 1996). Africa has different experiences: Africans have peculiar cultural and socio-economic traditions. Their political experience is also equally different. Most political instability is partly caused by the uncontextualized application of western systems and institutions that does not directly fit to the historical and traditional experiences of Africans. The alien systems and institutions did not consider the cultural values, ideals and social realities of Africa. What Africans require

is not a “best experience” but a best fit!

First generation African leaders inherited a society whose logical process of state formation, national integration and legitimation of power had already been aborted by the advent of colonialism and all its repercussions. They were visionaries and revolutionaries but they were not nation builders and planners. They were foreign educated and experienced and inherited the colonial state system. They were manipulated by foreign aid providers, the so-called partners, and technical experts.

The commodity economy has disrupted the logical economic and social development and fabric of the African society. “The economic inefficiency and the ‘modern political management matrix’ gave way to a severe struggle over which group is to control the state machinery and exploit it to increase wealth. The exclusion of large sectors of the population from the state’s spoils, economic opportunity and political rights and lack of equal opportunity have become the sources of unending protest and conflicts” (Al-Karsani, 1996).

Gaudzey (1992) has emphasized the role of economic exclusion in triggering protest and conflict over ethnic and political issues: “Viewed across the region as a whole, economic marginalization provides a much clearer guide than either ethnicity or even political exclusion to incidence of warfare in the Horn”.

For instance, as a result of long and atrocious war, Eritrea broke away from Ethiopia; the South Sudanese voted for the sovereignty of South Sudan, and Somalia became a failed state and broken into Somaliland, Puntland and Southern Somalia. The emergence of new states has inspired and encouraged others to demand similar rights and status. The Ogaden and the Oromo movements in Ethiopia are typical examples.

Moreover, the complications of economic stringency, financial austerity, and political instability exposed African states to exercise a “beggar economy”, or to be more dependent on foreign aid. For both economic and political reasons, African leaders follow a “donor-mandated economic policy”. They are forced to make uncontextualized reform programs such as the structural adjustment program that has finally put the African economy into

disarray and jeopardized the regional economic interaction (Al-Karsani, 1996).

Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) also played a significant role either in triggering or consolidating conflicts in the Horn of Africa. Fifty-four NGOs operated in the rebel areas of the Sudan. One-third (17) of the NGOs regarded themselves as Christian agencies. To advance and mask policies and strategies, the agencies use humanitarian activities as a cover (Al-Karsani, 1996).

Globalization is a result of global economic expansion and increased interdependence by the facilitation of communication through the internet (Mazroui, 1996). For Morgan (2001), it is an exaggeration to believe that “globalization”, which has been coupled with digitalization, supposed to signal the withering away of boundaries or confirmed the “death of geography”. For instance, Africa and her people are not well integrated to the world economy or social and cultural interaction through the internet and economic equity. Globalization, in some ways, has marginalized Africa. It has widened the drift between the rich and the poor.

What could be done?

No socio-economic, political and cultural progress would be imagined in a situation where a region is bedeviled with the complex problems of conflict, instability, migration, external interference etc. As Ikejiaku (2009) states, “Africa is the first home of mankind, yet the last to be made truly inhabitable in contemporary world as a result of poverty and underdevelopment”. He further reasons:

In the faces of present crises in Africa, the flaws underlying both modernization and democratization theories and the theory of colonialism are being exposed. The long held notion that modernity would result in smooth transition from authoritarian system to democratic system, with gradual elimination of conflict has failed woefully in Africa. Again, the view that colonialism... , the theory that the end of social, political and economic control of the developing countries by the advanced capitalist nations, particularly the colonialists, would lead to peaceful African states did not stand, as Africa has been besieged with plethora of conflicts since the end of colonialism (Ikejiaku, 2009).

The international University of Africa (IUA), on the occasion of the African University Congress in Khartoum, using the slogan “interrelations and interaction in Africa”, has called for the building of an African way of thinking for Africa.

At a time when the world is witnessing the emergence of regional and continental amalgamations to safeguard against the sweeping tide of globalization, Africans need to focus on their aims and determine their course. To achieve this, they must have a solid foundation from which they can take off, one that is fortified by constant interaction and integration, and strengthened by the common roots of their identity and shared cultural heritage (Ibrahim, 1996).

Africa, particularly the Horn of Africa, requires a paradigm shift in dealing with the twin and chronic problems (conflict and poverty) of the region. Until now, some governments and political bodies have tried to find out take off foundations to solve the intricate problems of their country. Nothing will happen in a fragmented way. Africa, the Horn of Africa, requires collaborative plan and action. It is time for African scholars, backed by research, to come together to discuss and find a working solution for African problems.

Participants of the 22nd World Economic Forum for Africa, at Addis Ababa (9-11 May 2012), agreed to make African development sustainable. For this, African leaders should play a pivotal and committed role to establish good governance, frameworking and participatory economic policies, educate the young, establish a generation hostile to corruption, mechanize farming and modernize animal husbandry, improve the status and varieties of export items, and be cautious in dealing with foreign aid and support (ETV, 11 May 2012). Kofi Annan, at this forum, underscored the importance of establishing job opportunities; otherwise the prevailing socio-economic situation will be a disaster.

A General Conference (Conference Draft, n.d.) to find a regional solution for problems of poverty and conflict in the Horn of Africa was summoned. At this conference were the AU, ILO and IGAD. The conference adopted “Employment for Peace, Stability and Development” as the major instrument to avert both poverty and conflict in the region. The conference also developed three skills to be implemented for the general strategies,

namely, the ability of critical thinking and problem solving, the ability to communicate, and the ability to collaborate. The implementation strategies also include the “Virtuous Triangle” which includes creating employment¹⁵ opportunities, protecting¹⁶ the most vulnerable, and empowering¹⁷ people and communities. The conference also reminded governments of the Horn to establish mechanisms of environmental protection.

Economically, resources should be distributed fairly, equitably through the system of equal opportunities to serve the working majority of the population. The Horn of Africa requires the networking of interdependent economic systems and infrastructure to build mutual trust and security. Farming and the pastoralist economy should be transformed into modern ways of cultivation and animal husbandry, respectively. These requires a democratic and transparent political system and political policies.

The political commitment to avert conflict through a transparent and accountable process of institutionalized democratization, trust-building, coalition-building and developing the culture of settling conflicts through negotiation are indispensable mechanisms to curb problems in the region. The Horn of Africa to be free from poverty and conflict, it should be democratic, unambiguously accept the colonial boundaries.

The role of women in the African socio-economic and political sphere is minimal, and in some cases non-existent. Their participation is crucial and indispensable in alleviating conflict and supporting the economic and political endeavors.

¹⁵ The strategy promotes employment opportunities through the increased use of local resources; labor intensive infrastructure and environment protection related works. It will further contribute to reduce poverty and facilitate economic empowerment through livelihood diversification opportunities for communities affected by displacement and conflict with a particular emphasis on women and youth.

¹⁶ The strategy will enhance the capacity to reduce vulnerability for those populations affected by the threat of complex situations in the region (conflict, natural disasters and acute climate change). It will adapt the concept of a wider social protection floor by building on existing coping strategies, community-based practices of mutuality, reciprocity and solidarity.

¹⁷ It will strengthen civil society; enhance the involvement of local communities in transforming the world of work: seeking to eradicate inequalities, discrimination, restrictions on the freedom of association and related conditions deeply associated with the root of conflicts.

Education is an important fulcrum for development. The promotion and expansion of African education is necessary and essential for peace building, the promotion of democracy, development and control of population growth. Education plays a significant role in inculcating awareness about the advantages and disadvantages of population increase, democracy, responsibility and rights.

The region needs to revisit the various aspects of its cultural practices and the role of culture in the development efforts and preserving peace and security. More and more social scientists consider cultural factors to explain modernization, political democratization, and military strategy, the behaviour of ethnic groups, and the alignment and antagonisms among countries. One of the various cultural factors is economic culture (work ethics, saving and the concept of time). Harrison and Huntington (2000), in their book *Culture Matters* explain that “The central conservative truth is that it is culture, not politics that determines the success of a society”. They further state:

An important question the people of the region must collectively ask themselves today is this: where do we go from here? The countries of the region need a complete paradigm shift in their relationships with each other. More than an accident of geography unites the people of the Horn; they are all closely related by culture and custom, if not by blood; they share a common destiny and a yearning for a better future. If nothing else, their common suffering from abject poverty, hunger, and disease must form the basis for the obvious imperative of economic unity that would allow the region to reap the benefits of economies of scale in resources, markets and capital. The region needs the leadership that would take them to the Promised Land: a region at peace with itself and with others; a region that is united by cause and common interest; a region that is economically integrated (Kalib, 2007).

Conclusion

The Horn of Africa is suffering from the twin problems of poverty and conflicts. These cataclysmic problems are the results of inseparably blended internal and external grafted elements. The history of the Horn of Africa explains that the presence of foreign powers pre-dates the advent of colonialism. In the 16th century, the Portuguese and the Ottoman Turks made the region a bone of contention and intervened in internal conflicts

such as in the wars of the Ethiopian highlanders and lowlanders. The legacy of colonialism is immense. However, it will not always be helpful to attach African problems only to colonialism.

In general, the indigenous socio-economic and political development processes, systems and institutions in the region have been aborted. All are interrupted and replaced by systems and institutions of colonialist and alien origin. With some exception, many scholars believe that most states in the Horn of Africa were colonial formations. The colonial made states in the Horn of Africa misfit between externally imposed structures, systems and institutions; and the internally different local traditional realities. The process of state building has encountered difficulties. Rather new state formation and proliferation has become the common practice in the Horn of Africa. The formation of the states of Eritrea and South Sudan are important examples in the region, the situation in the Somali countries is another.

Post-independence Horn of Africa has to struggle against the dominance of alien socio-economic, cultural and political systems or institutions but to achieve an African socio-economic and political progress. Africans should use foreign support pragmatically and shape it according to their context and interest. The establishment of a democratic system has become difficult and as a result many intra-state wars were fought, which invited the participation of neighboring states as a tit-for-tat. Force of arms has become the means to assume political power. This is further complicated by inter-state border conflicts.

Noticeably, the post-independence socio-economic and political reality of the Horn of Africa was in a situation where it was impossible to disentangling itself from the colonial past in the post-independence transformation process. For instance, the colonial legacies such as the colonial projected state formation, colonial established education systems; colonial grafted economic systems are actively in operation in the region and are to stay.

Internally, there is a stiff competition for power and resources, which is the result of absence of a democratic state system and institutions. Most of the time, such competitions lead to cataclysmic intra-state conflicts that

have consumed the young labor force, the scarce resources, and working time of the region. This also exposes the region to a wider range of foreign intervention and dependency on foreign aid.

At the same time, societies of the Horn of Africa particularly the political elite, were and still are unable to minimize the colonial impacts and strive for a contextualized transformation of the region's socio-economic, cultural and political development; or a general process of state building. This process is internal by nature and requires internal mechanisms, systems and structures. It also calls for internal collaboration and the emancipation from external intervention. However, this may not happen in the near future.

Thus, what is important for the Horn of Africa is to minimize the unconstructive legacies of colonialism, the negative impacts of foreign intervention, and to improve the political economy of the region. The political elite needs to practice good governance and work for fair distribution of resources and political power through a system of equal opportunities. States should respect the boundary decisions of the African Union and pay attention to infrastructural interconnection and socio-economic and cultural developments. As preconditions for progress, these measures will improve mutual trust and cooperation among the states and eventually diminish poverty and conflicts of the region. Africans should expand education and widely educate women.

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