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Navigating the Sudan Conflict
Understanding the Dynamics and Mediation Efforts

The HORN Bulletin is a bi-monthly publication by the HORN Institute. It contains thematic articles mainly on issues affecting the Horn of Africa region.

INSIDE

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Abstract

The article delves into the devastating conflict in Sudan, which has claimed thousands of lives, displaced countless people, and caused widespread destruction. It provides an account of the clash between the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) and the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF). The conflict has its roots in power struggles following the ousting of Omar al-Bashir in 2019. Several factors, including international community inaction and competing interests, have escalated the crisis. The article highlights mediation efforts by regional and international bodies, as well as Sudan's neighboring countries. It discusses the far-reaching implications of instability in Sudan for the entire region, such as threats to trade, security, and economies. The article emphasizes

Chairman of the Sovereignty Council of Sudan, Gen. Abdel Fattah Abdelrahman al-Burhan and Commander in Chief of the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) (left) and Deputy Chairman of the Sovereignty Council, Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo and the head of Rapid Support Forces (RSF) (right) (Photo Credit: Mahmoud Hjaj/Anadolu Agency)

the urgent need for collective action to bring peace and stability to Sudan, suggesting key recommendations for immediate and long-term efforts.

Introduction

Sudan has been in the midst of a devastating conflict since April 15, 2023. The clashes between the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) and the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) have claimed the lives of over 3,000 people, including 1,170 in El Geneina, West Darfur (Loanes, 2023; USAID, 2023). The fighting has also displaced hundreds of thousands of people and caused widespread damage to infrastructure. The RSF has been accused of committing a number of atrocities against civilians, including targeted killings, looting, and the use of human shields. The United Nations has called for an independent investigation into the abuses (USAID, 2023). The conflict has had a devastating impact on the people of Sudan, especially those in Khartoum state and Darfur. The fighting has exacerbated the already dire humanitarian situation in the country, and has led to a renewed sense of fear and insecurity. The international community must take action to end the violence in Sudan and to hold those responsible for the atrocities accountable (Nashed, 2023a).

The current conflict in Sudan between the army and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) can be traced back to the ousting of long-standing dictator Omar Hassan al-Bashir in 2019. Al-Bashir had initially come to power as an army general in 1989 and survived the 2011 Arab Spring protests that toppled leaders in other countries (Hassan & Kodouda, 2019). However, facing months of protests against his regime, he was eventually removed from power by the military under General Abdel Fattah Abdelrahman al-Burhan. In 2019, the military agreed to share power with civilians, but in 2021, General Burhan, now leading the military, and General Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo overthrew the civilian-led government (Nashed, 2023b). Since the coup, Sudan has been governed by a council of generals, effectively controlled by General Burhan and General Dagalo, who also leads the RSF militia. Constant clashes and disagreements between these two leaders have contributed to ongoing turmoil and violence in the country (Nashed, 2023b).

Previously, the two had worked together to topple the Omar al-Bashir government in 2019 and orchestrated a military coup in 2021, which removed the civilian prime minister and cabinet and suspended key clauses of the constitutional document (Manfredi Firmian, & Mirghani,

2022). The signing of a new framework agreement in December 2022, meant to establish a civilian-led government, triggered anger among some civilians and political parties, leading to the creation of counter-attack groups and divisions within the Forces of Freedom and Change (FFC) Questions arose over the integration of the RSF into the military and leadership of the consolidated armed forces, which exacerbated the conflict, particularly after a division between the SAF, RSF, and FFC during a workshop on Security Sector Reforms in March 2023 (Youssif, 2023).

Immediate Cause of the Recent Conflict Escalation in Sudan

As indicated earlier, the current conflict in the country arose from stalled negotiations, led by prominent national figures and the leaders of the armed struggle movements, attempting to resolve the issue. Tensions escalated between General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan and General Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, better known as 'Hemedti' in the weeks preceding the violence (Youssif, 2023). Although specific details have been vague, it is evident that both sides are vying for control over crucial institutions, with much of the fighting centered around key locations like the presidential palace, Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) headquarters, Khartoum Airport, Marawi Airport, and the Sudanese Radio and Television premises (Abdelaziz & Eltahir, 2023).

At the core of the conflict lays a struggle for power in the country, with the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) seeking to assert control over the security sector and state governance. A major point of contention has been the timing and sequencing of integrating RSF forces. Hemedti argues for reforms that promote inclusivity and professionalism within the military before any integration occurs. He also seeks to maintain his own paramilitary as a safeguard during the electoral process (Ochieng, 2023). On the other hand, SAF is dissatisfied with the proposed reforms, fearing that they could weaken the military and allow the RSF to dominate. Another sticking point in the negotiations is the issue of command structure.

It is alleged that the conflict in Sudan can be attributed to a carefully orchestrated military coup by a 'coalition of regional, international, and local political and civilian forces'. The aim was to install Hemedti as the country's leader, and the expulsion of existing SAF leaders, including General Burhan, and the establishment of a new political and security structure. Hemedti employed

a substantial military presence, with thousands of troops and armed vehicles, along with ample ammunition and logistics. Additionally, he strategically utilized a vast network of media personnel, institutions, and social media accounts to support the coup.

This well-organized approach allowed Hemedti to swiftly seize control of critical institutions, including the presidential palace, parts of the SAF headquarters, and Khartoum Airport, as well as detain high-ranking SAF officials during their daily commutes. The outbreak of clashes in Khartoum led to both parties trading accusations, but it was evident that preparations for the coup had been building up for some time, with RSF deploying armed personnel in Khartoum and SAF countering with tanks and heavy weapons the week before.

Several other factors also contributed to the escalation of the conflict. The failure of international bodies such as the United Nations, African Union, and IGAD Mechanism, as well as the Quad Mechanism (consisting of the United Kingdom, United States, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates), to facilitate a successful political process and guide the country towards democracy played a crucial role. Additionally, competition and conflicting interests among neighboring countries further complicated the situation. The international community's lack of a unified vision on resolving the conflict, coupled with deep differences among Sudanese political, civilian, and communal leaders and their hunger for power, added to the complexity (Crisis Group, 2023).

It is also alleged that regional bodies sought to exploit the situation to serve their own interests, taking advantage of Sudan's membership in the African Union. Global superpowers also had conflicting interests in the Sudanese coast of the Red Sea. The porous borders between Sudan and its western neighbors and the prevalence of hate speech have also exacerbated

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tensions and contributed to the outbreak of hostilities. The convergence of these multifaceted factors created a volatile environment that culminated in the outbreak of the conflict in Sudan.

The Complexities of the Ongoing Conflict

The ongoing conflict in Khartoum State has been characterized by rapidly changing military and security dynamics, making it extremely difficult to predict its outcome. The first three days of fighting saw a dramatic rise in violence and expansion in almost all areas of the state, with both parties vying for control over strategic locations and institutions. In separate interviews with Alhadath TV and Aljazeera on April 15, General Burhan and General Hemedti declared their refusal to negotiate with each other and vowed to continue fighting until either death or arrest (Crisis Group, 2023). This declaration further frustrated the Sudanese population and sent negative signals to their respective fighters, encouraging them to continue the conflict.

During the initial two months, the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) managed to control around 80% of Khartoum territories. RSF had the potential to mobilize hundreds of fighters from West Sudan and neighboring states, while the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) relied on their technical and professional troops, as well as air and artillery support. SAF intensified airstrikes and artillery shelling on RSF premises and areas of gatherings, with a focus on military logistics, equipment, and supply routes. In response, RSF redeployed its ground forces in residential areas in Khartoum and almost gained control over the southern part of the city. RSF frequently attacked strategic areas under SAF control, such as SAF garrisons, engineering headquarters, Wadi Saeedna air base, military tanks headquarters, and defense industry institutions (Al Jazeera, 2023).

Outside Khartoum, the situation remained relatively calm, with 17 out of 18 states under full control of SAF. However, there were deadly clashes in the Darfur region,
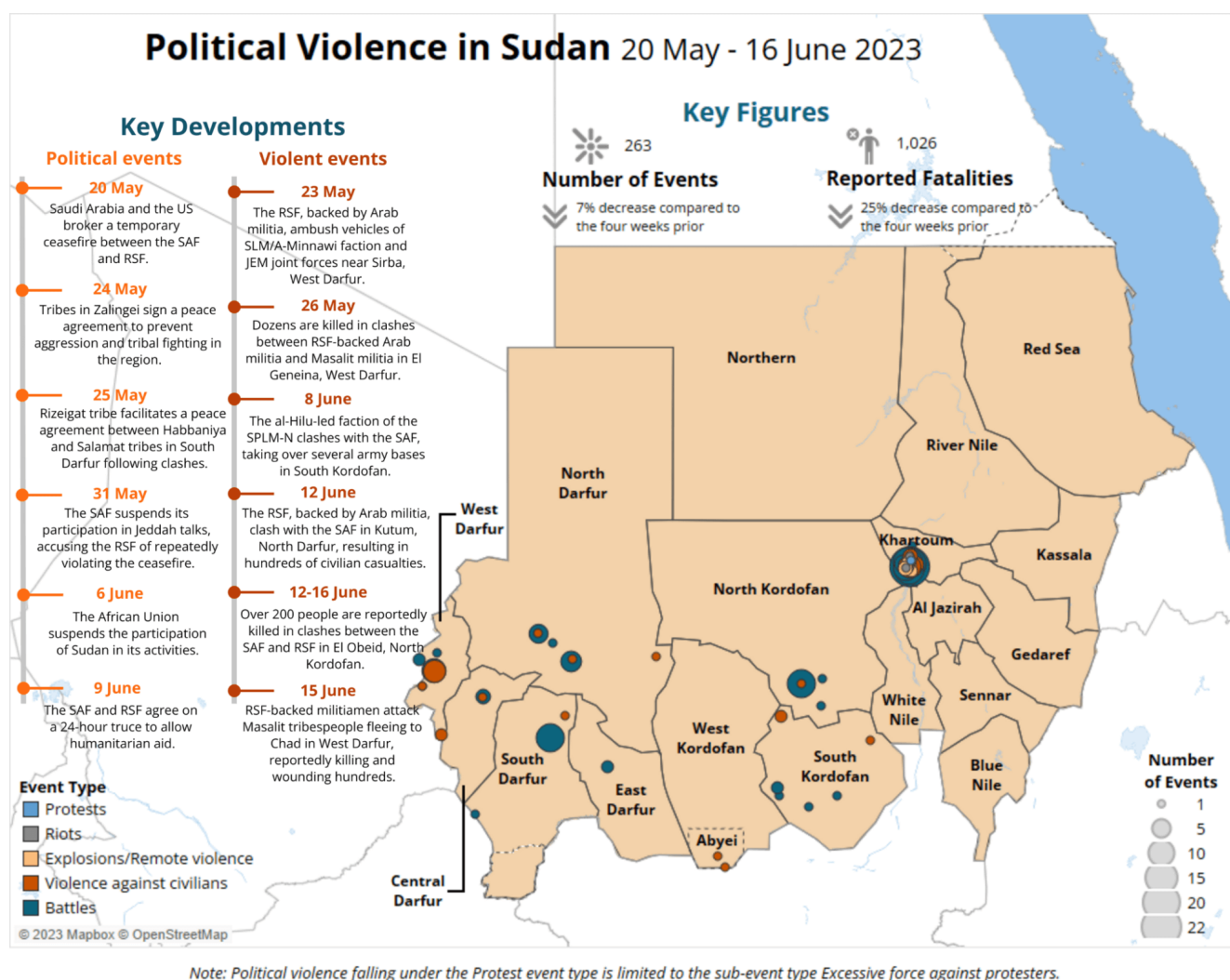

Figure 1 shows the Sudan Conflict Timeline

which was severely impacted by the war in Khartoum. In West Darfur, fierce confrontations between the two parties combined with ethnic clashes between non-Arab tribes and RSF, supported by allied militias. The participation of a significant number of foreign fighters from neighboring countries alongside RSF further complicated the situation and prolonged the crisis (Al Jazeera, 2023). Chad, in particular, promised to close its borders with Sudan to prevent the flow of fighters and logistics, but videos and reports showed Chadian armed movement leaders fighting alongside RSF in Khartoum.

By the beginning of the third month, SAF began launching ground military campaigns with support from airstrikes and artillery shelling. RSF faced logistical challenges, such as shortages of fuel, food, ammunition, and other necessary supplies. Moreover, RSF lost central control and communication with many key forces inside the city due to SAF's disruption of communication means and prevention of external supplies (Al Jazeera, 2023). As a result, RSF started losing control over its forces and suffered the loss of several key leaders in recent battles in Khartoum and state capitals.

SAF shifted from a defensive stance to attacking RSF gatherings and assets, successfully recapturing areas that were once under RSF control, especially in Omdurman and South Khartoum. The changing fighting approaches adopted by SAF, along with the influx of ground fighters due to the recent call upon reserves and civilians to join the fight, have contributed to these developments. Given the rapidly evolving nature of the conflict, it is challenging to speculate about its future. Neither party possesses the absolute military capacity to swiftly win the war, indicating that the conflict may continue for a considerable period, resulting in significant human and economic costs.

The Rise of Rapid Support Forces (RSF)

Of note, this conflict is different from what Sudan experienced in the past. In previous civil wars in Darfur, Blue Nile, South Kordofan, and East Sudan, the Sudanese government and its paramilitary groups fought against rebel armed movements. However, the current situation involves the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) fighting a paramilitary force that was created by the al-Bashir regime. The Rapid Support Forces (RSF) were once part of the state power and were developed and sustained by the state, which adds significant complexity to the conflict (Reuters, 2023).

The RSF, an evolved group stemming from the Janjaweed militias, emerged during the 2000s conflict in the Darfur region. Initially used by President Omar al-Bashir's government to quell rebellion, the Janjaweed led to the displacement of 2.5 million people and the death of 300,000. International Criminal Court prosecutors accused government officials and militia commanders of committing genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity during this period. Over time, the militia transformed into the RSF and, in 2013, was restructured to serve as border guards (Reuters, 2023). Subsequently, in 2015, the RSF joined Sudan's army in supporting Saudi and Emirati forces in Yemen, gaining recognition as a "regular force" that same year. Then, in 2017, a law was enacted to legitimize the RSF as an independent security force (Tchie, 2021).

The RSF expanded its operations beyond Darfur, deploying forces to regions like South Kordofan and the Blue Nile, where they were accused of human rights abuses. Human Rights Watch referred to the RSF as merciless in a 2015 report. It is estimated that the group comprises around 100,000 fighters. General Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo commands the RSF and currently serves as the deputy head of Sudan's ruling Sovereign Council. General Dagalo's background is humble, born into a financially deprived family that settled in Darfur during the 1980s. He had little formal education and previously earned a living trading camels. However, when the Darfur conflict erupted, Dagalo assumed leadership of the Janjaweed and subsequently rose in prominence. With the RSF's growing role in Sudan's security affairs, Dagalo's business interests thrived with support from al-Bashir. His family's holdings expanded into areas such as gold mining, livestock, and infrastructure (Tchie, 2021; Reuters, 2023).

Mediation Efforts: Regional and International Reaction

In a recent significant development (as of mid-July 2023), General Shamsadin Kabashi, the deputy head of the SAF, expressed SAF's interest in finding a political solution to bring an end to the devastating conflict. SAF has shown openness to all mediations aimed at achieving a peaceful resolution. This statement has opened a wider window of opportunity for a peaceful solution and has been warmly welcomed by major political parties, the RSF, civil society, as well as regional and international bodies.

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There has been a resounding and swift mobilization by countries in the region and across the globe, all calling for an immediate halt to the violence. Statements from the Troika and the Quad for Sudan (comprising the United States, the UK, the UAE, and Saudi Arabia) have echoed the calls for calm, with the United Nations Secretary-General also issuing a statement urging General Burhan and General Dagalo to end hostilities and return to negotiations. Even amid global tensions over the war in Ukraine and competition between the United States and China, international concerns about the escalating situation in Sudan have taken precedence, emphasizing the urgent need for peace and stability.

In response to the crisis, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) held an extraordinary meeting on Sunday, April 16, 2023. The IGAD Heads of States expressed their deep concerns about the implications the conflict has for regional peace and security. As part of their efforts to mediate, three presidents from the IGAD member countries plan to travel to Khartoum soon to engage in discussions with the two generals (Mutambo, A., Oluoch, F., & Abdallatif, 2023).

In parallel, the African Union Peace and Security Council convened an expanded meeting following the IGAD Summit. This gathering brought together a broad spectrum of regional and international stakeholders, including the US, UN, IGAD, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, EU, and the League of Arab States (LAS). Notably, Sudan was absent from the meeting due to its suspension from the African Union since October 25, 2021. In this context, the African Union has adopted IGAD's Roadmap and formed an expanded mechanism that includes the abovementioned entities to collectively address the crisis in Sudan. As the international community intensifies its efforts to find a peaceful resolution, there is hope that these multilateral engagements and mediations will lead to a cessation of hostilities and create a conducive environment for negotiations, ultimately paving the way for lasting peace and stability in Sudan.

Jeddah Facilitation Forum

The US and Saudi Arabia have taken an active role in seeking a resolution to the deadly crisis in Sudan by inviting the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) to peace talks in Jeddah. The primary objectives of these indirect negotiations were to reach a ceasefire, cessation of hostilities, and facilitate access to humanitarian assistance in the conflict-ridden region. However, despite the efforts made during the Jeddah forum, the two parties have shown a lack of commitment and political will to end the conflict through peaceful means, instead preferring to pursue military strategies (ACLED, 2023; Kossaify, 2023).

Throughout the talks, the Jeddah Forum managed to reach eight fragile truces on ceasefire. However, the implementation of these truces has been notably challenging due to the absence of ceasefire monitors on the ground, leading to difficulties in ensuring their full and effective execution. As a result, the forum's achievements have been limited, as it has not been successful in reaching long-term ceasefire agreements or achieving a sustainable and peaceful resolution to the ongoing catastrophic war. The situation in Sudan remains precarious, and the humanitarian crisis continues to escalate (ACLED, 2023). There is a pressing need for both parties involved to demonstrate genuine commitment to the peace process and engage in constructive dialogue to find a lasting solution that prioritizes the well-being of the Sudanese people and the restoration of peace and stability in the region (Radio Dabanga, 2023).

Darfur Leaders Converge in N'Djamena

In yet another attempt to bring about peace in Sudan, the President of the transitional council in Chad, General Mohamed Debi, has taken steps to address the crisis in Sudan by inviting leaders of the armed struggle movement, signatories to the Juba peace agreement, and the deputy commander general of the RSF, General Dagalo, for talks in N'Djamena. The main focus of these talks is to explore possibilities for an immediate solution to the ongoing crisis in Sudan and to address cross-

border security concerns between Sudan and Chad (Sudan Tribune, 2023).

Chad has been significantly impacted by the conflict in Sudan, hosting tens of thousands of refugees who have fled the violence in Darfur. Additionally, thousands of fighters from Chad's Arab tribes are participating alongside the RSF in the ongoing war in Sudan. General Debi's efforts to bring together leaders of the armed struggle movements and the RSF at the same table faced challenges when Mr. Manni Mannawi, the chairperson of the Darfur region's SLA, and Dr. Jibreel Ibrahim, the federal minister of finance and chairperson of JEM, refused to meet with the RSF.

The failure to bring all parties to the table underscores the complexity of the situation, and it highlights the urgent need for diplomatic efforts to address the ongoing crisis. Chad, as a neighboring country, is deeply affected by the conflict in Sudan, and the continuation of the war will only exacerbate economic, security, and humanitarian challenges in the region. Finding a peaceful and sustainable resolution to the Sudanese crisis is crucial not only for Sudan itself but also for neighboring countries like Chad, who are dealing with the consequences of the conflict. Regional cooperation and dialogue remain key to achieving stability and preventing further escalation of the humanitarian and security situation in the region.

IGAD's Forum on Sudan

The Quartet Group, a mechanism established by IGAD to address the crisis in Sudan and chaired by Kenyan President Dr. William Ruto, took the initiative to invite General Burhan and General Dagalo for a meeting in Addis Ababa on July 10, 2023. The primary objectives of the meeting were to halt the ongoing fighting in Sudan, create conditions for humanitarian operations, and explore potential political solutions to the crisis. However, the Sudanese delegation did not participate in the meeting, citing their concerns over the final communiqué of the last IGAD summit held in Djibouti. Sudan accused certain sections of the delegation as being partisan, which resulted in their decision to not enter the meeting room.

Despite the absence of the Sudanese delegation, the meeting proceeded and produced some outcomes aimed at stopping the conflict and facilitating the provision of humanitarian assistance. However, the lack of representation from Sudan weakened the impact and effectiveness of the forum's outcomes. In light of this,

IGAD may need to reassess its initiative and work towards finding an amicable solution to the differences between Kenya and Sudan. A rapid reconciliation between the two countries is crucial to enhance the effectiveness of the forum. To this end, President Ruto conducted a phone call with General Burhan on July 15, 2023, in an effort to calm the situation and foster dialogue.

There remains a window of opportunity for the IGAD initiative to address the Sudanese crisis. However, it will require further efforts to overcome the deep misunderstanding between Kenya and Sudan. Ensuring inclusive and constructive engagement from all parties involved is essential to pave the way for meaningful progress in resolving the crisis and achieving lasting peace in Sudan.

Sudan's Neighboring Countries Forum in Egypt

Egypt has taken a significant step towards finding a solution to the ongoing crisis in Sudan by calling for a meeting of Sudan's Neighbors summit, which took place on July 13. The summit was attended by Libya, Chad, the Central African Republic, South Sudan, Ethiopia, and Eritrea, along with representatives from the League of Arab States (LAS). Notably, Sudan did not attend this forum, despite its potential, likely due to the strained relationships with some neighboring countries. Egypt's position as a regional neighbor and its good relationship with Sudan make this summit an important platform for potential progress. Egypt has also played a crucial role in hosting a significant number of refugees fleeing the conflict in Sudan, further demonstrating its commitment to the region's stability.

While the specifics of the meeting's agenda and the proposed initiative have not been publicly disclosed, it is anticipated that the forum will complement ongoing efforts by other entities, such as Saudi Arabia, the United States, the African Union (AU), LAS, and IGAD. An inclusive

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Members of Sudan's Rapid Support Forces on June 18th, 2019 (Photo Credit: Yasuyoshi Chiba/AFP/Getty Images)

and integrated approach to addressing the Sudanese crisis will be emphasized, considering the complexity of the conflict and its regional and international dimensions. Part of the focus of the forthcoming meeting in Egypt should also be on addressing the role of General Khalifa Haftar of Libya and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) in the conflict. These actors have been involved in the crisis, and their actions and intentions warrant further scrutiny.

To achieve progress, it is essential for Egypt to seek clear and fair responses to fundamental questions about the conflict's protraction and the goals pursued by both parties involved. Understanding the motivations and drivers behind the ongoing fighting will serve as an entry point for formulating practical and amicable solutions.

As Egypt convenes the summit, it must present a concrete proposal for an effective way forward that is acceptable to both parties and the various facilitation platforms involved. By doing so, Egypt can play a crucial role in advancing the peace process and bringing about a resolution to the Sudanese crisis. A collaborative and unified approach from the neighboring countries and international actors is vital to foster a conducive environment for dialogue, cooperation, and lasting peace in Sudan.

Sudan Conflict and Implications for the Region

The horrifying atrocities in Sudan serve as a wake-up call for the region and the international community, as they grapple with the consequences of lawlessness and instability in neighboring Libya. The potential consequences of instability and lawlessness in Sudan are far-reaching and will impact the wider region.

Sudan, with its strategic location in a volatile region, is a large country with a population of over 45 million. Its vast territory, measuring 1.86 million square kilometers, makes it the third largest country in Africa, with an extensive land border of 6,817 kilometers shared with seven neighboring countries: Egypt, Libya, Central African Republic, Chad, South Sudan, Ethiopia, and Eritrea. These seven countries, in turn, share borders with 14 others, magnifying the potential ripple effects of the conflict to around 22 countries and affecting nearly 500 million people (FSD Africa, n.d.).

The collapse of the state in Sudan would have grave consequences for Africa and beyond. The vast expanse of territory stretching from the Red Sea and the Horn of Africa to West Africa and the Sahel region would be

seriously endangered. Long porous borders without natural barriers pose significant security threats, especially as some ethnic communities straddle across these borders, and mercenaries have been seen fighting alongside the Rapid Support Forces (RSF).

The current crisis has resulted in many displaced individuals seeking refuge in other parts of the country. However, in the event of a state collapse, the number of refugees and illegal migrants from the region could reach unimaginable numbers. This would create an ideal environment for terrorist groups to find new opportunities in the wider space, while human trafficking and other criminal activities would be emboldened, potentially leading to an influx of migrants aiming for the Mediterranean route to Southern Europe.

Besides, global trade could also be at risk. Sudan's extensive western shores along the Red Sea play a vital role in international trade, with around 30% of global trade passing through this crucial waterway. The challenges of piracy, previously witnessed off the Somali coast, could potentially resurface along Sudanese shores, possibly forming alliances between pirates and terrorists.

Beyond security and trade concerns, instability in Sudan would have severe consequences for the economy of the Republic of South Sudan, Africa's youngest nation. South Sudan heavily relies on Sudanese infrastructure to process, transport, and export its crude oil, which forms the backbone of its economy.

Sudan also plays a critical role in the fight against hunger and achieving food security in Africa and the Arab world. The recent report by the World Food Programme (WFP) revealed that the conflict in Sudan led to a 28% surge in the price of basic food commodities in the Republic of South Sudan and Chad. Additionally, Sudan's location in the Horn of Africa and its adjacency to the Sahel region, both prone to drought and desertification, further exacerbate food security challenges.

Given the significant regional and international implications of Sudan's crisis, urgent and collective efforts are required to address the root causes and find peaceful and sustainable solutions. Cooperation between neighboring countries, international organizations, and the broader global community is essential to mitigate the escalating humanitarian, security, and economic challenges and pave the way for stability and development in the region.

Addressing the Sudanese Crisis: Key Recommendations

In the short term, neighboring countries must take proactive measures to control their borders with Sudan, preventing the movement of fighters, arms trafficking, and other transnational crimes. This will help contain the conflict's spillover effects and reduce the risk of civil and inter-tribal conflict in the region.

In the medium term, regional and international powers should display strong political will and prioritize finding a peaceful resolution to the conflict. Competing interests must be set aside in favor of Sudan's stability and peace. Neighboring countries, in particular, should work together through concerted and coordinated political and diplomatic efforts to address the root causes of the conflict and facilitate dialogue between the conflicting parties.

Regarding governance and humanitarian response, the caretaker government has taken the city of Port Sudan as an alternative capital to Khartoum. Government officials, along with UN agencies, donors, and regional organizations, are actively engaging in providing humanitarian assistance and addressing issues related to internally displaced persons (IDPs), refugees, and host communities. Donations from Arab countries, UN agencies, Turkey, India, Pakistan, and others have been instrumental in supporting these efforts.

However, humanitarian operations face several challenges, including limited assistance in conflict-affected areas, inadequate budget allocation by the government, difficulties in accessing comprehensive data and statistics on affected populations, insecurity in Khartoum and Darfur, and countering negative media campaigns on social media, which can tarnish the humanitarian efforts' image.

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As the conflict continues for more than three months with no signs of absolute military victory for either party, it becomes evident that the only viable way forward is through peace talks. Both parties have expressed their interest in resolving the conflict through negotiations, with a preference for the Jeddah forum as a neutral and promising venue for peace initiatives. Discussions between the mediators and conflicting parties are ongoing, with plans to resume peace talks in Jeddah by the end of the week.

The resolution of the Sudanese crisis requires sustained commitment and collaboration from regional and international stakeholders. A peaceful and inclusive dialogue is essential to find common ground and lasting solutions that prioritize the well-being and stability of Sudan and its neighboring countries. Only through collective efforts can the region hope to overcome the challenges posed by the conflict and move towards a more secure and prosperous future.

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'Limited Security Alignments' in the Indo-Pacific and Africa: Implications for International Conflict Management in South Sudan

By Sanjida Amin

Abstract

The purpose of this article is twofold. First, it seeks to understand the major trends in security alignments in the Indo-Pacific and Africa in the last decade. Drawing on Ciorciari's (2010) theory of 'limited alignments', the article argues that instead of balancing or bandwagoning in the US-China rivalry, secondary states have adopted an open and flexible alliance relationship that demonstrates a clear preference towards either US or China, and yet falls short of a tight alliance resembling the geopolitical blocs formed during the Cold War. Second, noting a vast majority of secondary states in the Indo-Pacific and Africa face security threats from internal conflicts, the article traces out the implications of limited alignment strategy in the diminishing pattern of security support from the major powers, which is directly reflected in international conflict management efforts. The analysis further underscores the importance of strategic alignment in resolving conflicts in fragile states, such as South Sudan, where international support is critical for successful peacekeeping and conflict resolution initiatives. In this regard, the article contends that while limited alignment strategy may shield secondary states from being dragged into a major power competition, given the impact it has on international conflict management, this strategy is likely to worsen, at least in the short-term, the security challenges facing these regions.

Introduction

The newly emerged security alignments in vast regions like the Indo-Pacific and Africa do not quite fit the Cold War mold. After all, secondary states, middle powers, and weak states alike, have learned that competition between major powers has very little relevance to the security challenges secondary states face in the current global environment. This is especially true for fragile states that are constantly battling intra-state conflicts, terrorist attacks, and environmental disasters.

The first objective of this article is to understand the major trends in security alignments in the Indo-Pacific and Africa in the last decade. Drawing on Ciorciari's (2010) theory of 'limited alignments', the article argues that instead of balancing or bandwagoning in the US-China rivalry, secondary states have adopted an open and flexible alliance relationship that demonstrates a clear preference towards either US or China, and yet falls short of a tight alliance resembling the geopolitical blocs formed during the Cold War. The emergence of the US-led security alliances in the Indo-Pacific, culminated

in major security pacts such as AUKUS (trilateral security pact between Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States), and the revival of Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (commonly known as the Quad, comprising Australia, India, Japan, and the United States), both of which are clear examples of secondary states shaking hands with the US to counter China's aggression in the region (Li, 2020). On the other hand, although African states continue to pursue economic and security alliances with the US, China's growing presence in African peace and security demonstrates that African states are leaning towards China. Over the decades since the Cold War, China's heavy involvement in development projects and economic ties with Africa gave China the leverage to grow their influence in the region (Kovrig, 2018).

A second related objective of this article is to trace out the implications of limited alignment strategy in the diminishing pattern of security support from the major powers to secondary states, that is directly reflected in

A figure showing the Indo-Pacific area (Photo Credit: Carnegie Endowment)

international conflict management efforts. Based on that account, the article argues that while limited alignment strategy may shield secondary states from being dragged into a major power competition, in absence of a committed security protector that comes with tight alliance, this strategy is likely to worsen, at least in the short-term, the security challenges facing these regions.

Limited Alignment Strategy

While the strategic behavior of secondary states in the Indo-Pacific and Africa has been described by strategic non-alignment or hedging (see, for example, Chan, 2020; Medeiros, 2005; Tessman 2012; Tan, 2020) a close comparison of the behavioral trend of secondary states reveals that 'limited alignment' more adequately captures the strategy secondary states have adopted in the last decade. Ciorciari (2010) distinguishes 'limited alignment' from other concepts like 'strategic non-alignment' or 'hedging' by suggesting that in the face of major power competition secondary states hardly have a choice to remain strictly non-aligned. The strategy is wrapped in more ambiguous foreign policy that involves tilting toward one or more major powers while avoiding tight alliance relationships. More specifically, Ciorciari (2010) points out, "Limited alignments entail lower commitment and a less binding security relationship. They typically include arrangements for preferential arms sales, joint training exercises, and other forms of military aid. Such relationships are usually public, but they do not carry a general pledge of military support in the event of a crisis or a general commitment to engage in joint combat operations. Limited alignments seldom give a great power basing privileges. Instead, great-power partners may enjoy commercial access to military facilities and some degree of logistical or technical assistance" (p.8).

Why are the secondary states in the Indo-Pacific and Africa adopting limited alignment policy?

As far as the rationale for limited alignment strategy goes, secondary states adopt this policy based on risk-and-reward calculus (Ciorciari, 2010). In the context of the Indo-Pacific and Africa, there are three important determinants of this calculus. First, while the Indo-Pacific maybe tilting towards the US, and Africa towards China, the commonality between them is that both regions are wary of the risks associated with building a tight alliance with either the US or China (Seah, 2023; Sheehy, 2022). Decades may have passed since the Cold War ended, but memories of proxy wars in Vietnam and several states in Africa cut deep in both these regions. The policymakers

of both the regions therefore want to avoid forgoing their autonomy, and being dragged into major power conflicts against their will. Of course, building tight alliances with the United States or China would bring rewards such as protection from internal and external threats, as well as economic and political assistance. However, the associated risk of being entrapped in major power competition is too high to find it worthwhile.

Second, the uncertainty spurred on by a multipolar environment is another key reason for limiting security ties and keeping options open. In a multipolar environment, neither the rewards nor the risks of alignment are certain. Further to that point, despite its massive arms build-up, and the expansion of bi-lateral security partnerships, China's biggest ambition is still placed in the economic arena. Therefore, the likelihood of China challenging US's global dominance by forging security blocs remains far from imminent. Similarly, the US may have publicly taken an anti-China stance, especially under the Trump administration, the open and flexible security partnership the US has pursued in recent years illustrated that US certainly does not discount peaceful Chinese behavior (Acharya, 2018). In a period of muted major power tension, neither US nor China therefore wish to commit the necessary resources to any particular state to forge alliance. This ambiguity in major powers' intention makes it difficult for secondary states to build tight alliances in fear of abandonment.

Finally, regional, and sub-regional organizations, namely, ASEAN and AU, played an important role in constructing regional identity in the Indo-Pacific and Africa. Through their participation in regional organizations secondary states are bolstered in their demand to have more autonomy, thus feel less pressured to choose more risky alternatives of tight alliance or strict nonalignment. Given these three factors, limited alignment in the current security environment has become a convenient default strategy, within which policymakers of secondary states have enough autonomy and flexibility to shift course if conditions change.

Limited Alignment in the Indo-Pacific

The concept of the Indo-Pacific, which is centered around the Indian and Pacific Oceans, has been imagined and subsequently evoked as a security challenge to China's increasing politico-military assertiveness in the region (Medcalf, 2018). The security architecture of the Indo-Pacific has been based on the US-led system of bilateral

alliances known as the hub-and-spokes system. The US maintains these alliances with Australia, the Philippines, Thailand and, most intensively, with Japan and South Korea (Heiduk, 2022). The most prominent the Indo-Pacific security alignments in the last decade are also US-led alliances, culminating in the revival of Quad and AUKUS. Although many secondary states in the region continues to maintain non-security/economic engagement with China, the Indo-Pacific region as a whole tilt towards US-led alliance system in relation to security (Chan, 2020).

When Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (commonly known as the Quad) between Australia, India, Japan, and the United States was revived at the ASEAN Summit in Manila in November 2017, it gave many analysts Cold War flashbacks. This was especially because the decision came amid rising tensions between the United States and China under the Trump administration. More recently, the trilateral security pact between Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States (AUKUS) is yet another geopolitical bloc that is reminiscent of the Cold War. Although the level of institutionalization of these security arrangements resembles a tight alliance relationship, a closer at these states' policies, especially their lack of commitment in joint military initiatives when it comes to dealing with crises reveals their limitations.

First, there is deep ambivalence in the commitment to the Quad among the regional major players like Japan and India, as well as middle powers like Australia. The Quad may have been envisioned as a China-containment strategy by the US, but it does not mean that remaining members see it as such. In a recent study, Panda contends that New Delhi's new-found interest in the Quad can hardly be interpreted as buying into the US's China-containment strategy. Rather, through its participation in the Quad, India is mostly pursuing a regional goal of "[balancing] China's strategic ambition in the Indian Ocean" (Rossiter & Cannon, 2020, p.6). Rossiter and

> " … the open and flexible security partnership the US has pursued in recent years illustrated that US certainly does not discount peaceful Chinese behavior

Cannon further note (2020, p.6-7): "[w]hile India uses the Quad to push back against an assertive China, particularly Beijing's attempts to overthrow India's hegemony in the Indian Ocean, New Delhi is cognizant of the Quad's severe limitations. In short, the 2017 Doklam crisis pitting China against India made it clear that none of the Quad states would intervene substantially on India's behalf to affect the outcome in New Delhi's favor."

Furthermore, despite the emerging strategic alliance between Moscow and Beijing, India does not seem to sever its ties with Russia. Moscow is also open to India's proposal for a more active role for Russia in the Indo-Pacific region. New Delhi and Moscow also share a geoeconomic interest in creating an alternative to China's terrestrial Silk Road connectivity in South and Central Asia, which is why they are promoting the International North-South Transport Corridor as a multimodal transit route linking India with Europe, Central Asia, and Russia (Tchakarova, 2022). This suggests that India is also open to letting Russia become a major player in the Indo-Pacific region to ensure multipolarity in the region.

Australia's commitment to these security partnerships tells a similar story. Despite the fact that Australia has been a long-time US ally, and now involved in two separate security alliances with the US, Canberra's attitude when it comes to showing allegiance to Washington has remained ambiguous given that Australia continues to maintain close economic ties with China. In the run-up to the May 2019 federal election, for example, Prime Minister Scott Morrison, reportedly used the words "friends" and "customers" to describe Australia's relationships with the United States and China, respectively (Chan, 2020).

Despite its level of instutionalization, an unwritten rule is that the Quad will refrain from any joint military action unless there is a 'common threat' facing the members. And given the lack of strategic consonance between the Quad members, it remains ambiguous as to what qualifies as a common threat.

The attitude of the secondary states in the Indo-Pacific outside these geopolitical blocs further exemplifies how the region is pursuing a strategy of limited alignment. When it was initially conceived, the Quad was seen with skepticism by many states in the region, mainly because the group focused primarily on security strategy and countering China. More recently, however, under the Biden administration, the Quad's emphasis has shifted to focus on delivering regional public goods and services

that the Indo-Pacific countries are keenly interested in, including global health care, climate policy, infrastructure, disaster response, and education (Seah, 2023).

Repurposing the strategic goal from exclusively countering China to a broader vision that appears to support ASEAN countries certainly helped the Quad get approval from the policy community. According to the State of Southeast Asia 2023 survey published by the ASEAN Study Centre, slightly more than half of Southeast Asian experts polled said that a stronger Quad will be a positive development for the region—with only 12 percent disagreeing (ibid). The message is clear. The Indo-Pacific community will be "friendly" to these geopolitical blocs so long the region is not caught in the maelstrom of major power competition.

Limited alignment in Africa

While the US's foreign policy focus has been on the Russian military threat in Eastern Europe and Chinese expansionism in the Pacific, China's influence in Africa has increased significantly. The limited alignment between China and African states appears to be mutual. In Africa and everywhere else, China continues to employ the non-interference principle to pursue its preferred foreign policy objective that focuses on economic penetration, and behind the scenes diplomacy (Wehrey & Alkoutami, 2020). African states prefer this open and flexible security alignment with China over Us vs. Them narrative US has employed in the past.

The US has a long legacy of being the "security protector" of Africa since the beginning of Cold War. After the Cold War, U.S. policy has focused on humanitarian objectives, intervening in Somalia to stop a famine, and initiating the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief — and investment of more than $100 billion to combat HIV/AIDS. After the attacks of 9/11, however, the preponderance of U.S. diplomatic and military energy has focused on countering violent extremist organizations as part of the Global War on Terror.

China's engagement in Africa during the Cold War in comparison was mainly limited to Beijing's support of liberation movements fighting colonial rule. However, China's economic engagement in the region has grown consistently over the last few decades, being formalized in 2013 with the Belt and Road Initiative. While certain countries, including Ethiopia, Angola, and Zambia, have been a priority, China has grown its presence in almost every African country (Sheehy, 2022). More recently,

China's economic influence in the region was further strengthened with a renewed pledge of billions in Chinese loans, grants, and investments this year in the Forum on China–Africa Cooperation (FOCAC).

Given China's ever-growing economic and commercial interests in Africa, Beijing rising role in African security is certainly expected. Over the past decade China's role in peace and security has also grown rapidly through arms sales, military cooperation, and peacekeeping deployments in Africa (Kovrig, 2018). In 2017, China completed its first overseas military base in Djibouti, breaking a long-established policy against basing Chinese troops abroad. There have been reports of China looking to build naval bases on Africa's Atlantic Ocean coast, including in Equatorial Guinea, where Chinese companies have constructed and upgraded port facilities (Staden, 2022). Many security experts in the US further caution, China is well-positioned with its strategic presence in Africa leveraging its extensive economic ties with the region (Sheehy, 2022; Vertin, 2020).

To counter China's enhanced role in African peace and security, the US has recently ramped up its bilateral security ties with many African states. The US Department of State obligated $6 million in International Military Education and Training (IMET) funding for the Nigerian military from fiscal year 2016 to 2020. As part of the Africa Military Education Program (AMEP), Nigeria received $1.1 million since 2016 to support instructor and/or curriculum development at Nigerian military schools. From 2016 to 2020, $1.8 million was obligated for Nigeria in Foreign Military Financing to support maritime security, military professionalization, and counterterrorism efforts. Nigeria is also an active member of the Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership (TSCTP) and has benefitted from $10.6 million worth of training, equipment, and advisory support for counterterrorism efforts between 2017 and 2020 (US Department of State, 2022). More recently, the United States and Papua New Guinea signed a Defense Cooperation Agreement (DCA) and an Agreement Concerning Counter Illicit Transnational Maritime Activity Operations" (U.S. Department of State, 2023). However, the security deal hardly indicates a preference for Washington over Beijing. Instead, it seems Papua New Guinea, which has extensive security and economic ties with China and Australia, is seeking to diversify further (Greico, 2023).

The 2018 Beijing Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC). China's economic influence in the region has been strengthened with a renewed pledge of billions in Chinese loans, grants, and investments in 2023 in the FOCAC (Photo Credit: Brookings Institution)

South Sudan President Salva Kiir and Vice President Riek Machar at a past function (Photo Credit: Peacerep)

Establishing limited alignments with multiple great-power partners, like the one adopted by Papua New Guinea, however, is not a new trend. African states did so during the Cold War. It has now become the default strategy which allows African states to cultivate friendly ties with multiple major powers, working most closely with whichever partner best suits the country's security and economic interests on a given issue.

Security challenges facing the secondary states in the Indo-Pacific and Africa

Secondary states, as it was conceptualized in this article, includes both middle powers and weak states. Before addressing the security challenges facing secondary states in the Indo-Pacific and Africa, it must be noted that security needs for middle powers and weak states are starkly different. While middle powers recognize major power competition as a direct threat to their security, weak states are understandably more concerned with the more immediate and intractable security challenges they face from internal conflict, terrorism, and environmental disasters. At the same time, they disproportionally feel the impact of limited alignment when major powers withhold or retrench their defense support and various forms of aid.

Furthermore, given a muted major power competition between the US and China, there is not enough incentive for major powers to commit the necessary resources to secondary states to forge allegiance. This retrenchment of military support is directly reflected in conflict management efforts major powers, especially the US, have undertaken in the past. Therefore, limited alignment might be an optimal regional solution to major power competition, we must carefully consider its impact on weak states that rely on external sources to handle the security challenges they face.

In the same vein, just as it was helpful to compare the security architecture of vast regions like Indio-Pacific and China to understand the behavioral patterns of secondary states, when addressing the security challenges a vast majority of the states face, one must acknowledge the murky security landscape of these regions. While the Indo-Pacific consists of several regional major players such as India, Japan, and the UK, countries that benefit from having relative autonomy from major powers, the subregions of Northeast Asia, Southeast Asia, and South Asia, which remain home to Asia's hottest regions for intra-state conflicts display a starkly different security need.

The conflict situation is less concentrated in African regions. Despite continued effort to establish a peaceful Africa, armed conflicts continue in several parts of the continent. According to the World Bank, six African countries currently bear high institutional and social fragility, and 14 are engaged in medium or high-intensity conflicts. Similarly, according to the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED) the number of conflict-related deaths in the region increased almost 10-fold from a decade ago to more than 20,000 in 2020 (Fofack, 2022). Furthermore, the ever-present threat to terrorism is unlikely to disappear in the coming years. Africa will also continue to face the threat of violent extremism and terrorism in the Sahel and Lake Chad Basin (LCB) regions, East Africa and the Horn, and Mozambique's northern province of Cabo Delgado. Several coastal countries of West Africa are also vulnerable to terrorist attacks.

The impact of limited alignment on international conflict management

As mentioned earlier, major powers provide security to secondary states in exchange for loyalty. In their effort to forge limited alignments, secondary states therefore forgo security guarantees that come with tight alignment. As Ciorciari (2010, p.10) cautions, "The danger of pursuing flexible, limited ties is that a great power may not rescue or support a [state] that it perceives as a lukewarm or fair-weather friend. Consequently, alignment strategies need to be carefully calibrated."

The most tangible tradeoffs secondary states forgo are defense support and various forms of aid. For example, the diminishing pattern of security support is prevalent US funding levels to Africa. Despite the humanitarian crises, conflicts and multiple epidemic outbreaks facing the region, US funding levels to Africa have remained roughly the same since 2008, hovering at $8 billion for all assistance needs including for example humanitarian, health, development and DRG across the entire sub-Saharan region. For fiscal year 2021, the United States gave $7.65 billion in DRG assistance to Africa. This included only $11.5 million for human rights and $9.2 million for independent media for the entire continent (Widdersheim & Nantulya, 2022).

China's stance in providing security to other states has not changed because China has always remained cautious of getting entangled in the internal conflicts of other states. Contrary to the expectation of many foreign policy experts, and despite its growing commercial presence, China has mainly remained on the sidelines concerning conflict resolution diplomacy in Africa. Earlier this year, Beijing did appoint a special envoy for the Horn of Africa, and held a peace conference in Ethiopia, but China has not been as active in diplomacy surrounding that country's the devastating civil war as might be expected given its heavy commercial and political investment in Ethiopia (Sheehy, 2022).

The rewards middle powers derive by aligning with a major power are not limited to material benefits. It also brings political support in diplomatic forums. When major powers withhold their political support, it can directly impact the UN's effort to conflict resolution. The lack of international response in the Ethiopia and Myanmar conflicts are all but two recent examples in which lack of commitment from major powers resulted in half-hearted international response (Gowan, 2021). Although, in recent years, regional and sub-regional organizations—most notably in Africa have taken on a leadership role in conflict resolution efforts, without any backing from the major powers, regional organizations and coalitions have not had the diplomatic or technical capacities to keep up with their ambitions. Nonetheless, a continued lack of strategic commitment from the US or China will likely spur further, if haphazard, regional peacemaking efforts.

International conflict management in South Sudan

While retrenchment of military and financial aid by the major powers poses myriad of challenges to fragile states, it has a direct and immediate impact on conflict

Despite the humanitarian crises, conflicts and multiple epidemic outbreaks facing the region, US funding levels to Africa have remained roughly the same since 2008, hovering at $8 billion for all assistance needs including for example humanitarian, health, development and DRG across the entire sub-Saharan region

management efforts that cannot be overstated. The Taliban's takeover of Afghanistan shortly after US military withdrawal in 2021 is perhaps the most dramatic example of the extent to which US's retrenchment position impacts the long-term stability of fragile states. In other states where major powers were not as heavily involved as US did in Afghanistan, the implications of strategic retrenchment are much less obvious, but equally devastating.

The humanitarian crisis in South Sudan is a case in point. South Sudan's civil war, which started as a power struggle within the ruling party, the Sudan Peoples' Liberation Movement (SPLM), has now turned into a full-blown ethnic conflict. Both President Salva Kiir's Dinka and his former deputy, Riek Machar's Nuer factions have been accused of committing atrocities, including acts of ethnic cleansing and targeted killings. Many South Sudanese, who endured decades of a brutal civil war between the south and the north, now find themselves back in the same situation (Dieng, 2014).

While conflict management effort in South Sudan has been led by Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) since the beginning, the Troika – comprising of the U.S., the UK and Norway - has supported the process in various ways. The US in particular played a critical role in getting the peace accord signed in 2015 (Mutasa & Virk, 2017. However, since then, Washington's diplomatic engagement in South Sudan has gradually deteriorated. Towards the end of his second term, President Barack Obama committed to providing U.S. military assistance to South Sudan. However, the policy shift under Trump administration which entailed significant reduction in foreign aid set a new trajectory for US foreign policy (Clarke, Fox, & Greene, 2017). The US is no longer interested in reassuming its leadership role in conflict management efforts.

US's decision to cut down its funding for war crimes court in South Sudan may be the starkest example of strategic retrenchment. In 2015, Obama administration pledged $5 million to set up this AU-Hybrid court. The idea was subsequently shelved and the bulk of U.S. money for the court was quietly returned to the U.S. Treasury or allocated into other programs on South Sudan. The step was heavily criticized by human rights expert leaving South Sudanese soldiers and militia responsible for carrying out atrocities, such as mass executions, gang rape, torture, sexual slavery,

and the orchestrated starving of civilians, unaccountable for their crimes (Gramer & Lynch, 2023). Meanwhile, the atrocities South Sudan continue, regardless of the recent cessation of hostilities' agreement.

Unfortunately, China is not filling the diplomatic vacuum created by Washington's retrenchment in South Sudan. In 2015, China deployed a few hundred troops serving under the UN and offered diplomatic support for the IGAD-mediated peace deal (Gowan, 2020). However, despite having considerable economic and political influence in South Sudan, Beijing seems uninterested to bring that leverage to the table, which could prove consequential for the mediation efforts in South Sudan (International Crisis Group, 2017).

Ultimately, as the South Sudan case exemplifies, the role of alignment is critical in the area of international conflict management. A successful resolution of conflict in South Sudan hinges on a strong international support system. Without the financial backing from the major powers, multilateral actors, whether it is IGAD, the AU, or the UN are not equipped with the tool to sustain regional pressure on the parties and foster a longer-term strategy for addressing South Sudan's systemic political instability.

What does the future hold?

The situation, however, is not all doom and gloom. In revealing their new Africa strategy, Biden administration emphasized that it welcomes and affirms African agency and seeks to include and elevate African voices in the most consequential global conversations (The White House, 2022). In their official communique titled *China and Africa in the New Era: A Partnership of Equals,* China also endorsed the "Silence the Guns in Africa" initiative in countries and regional organizations such as the AU. The report further indicates that China intends to continue its financial support for the AU's independent peacekeeping operations through the UN. It also mentions that while continuing with their non-interference principle, China intends to have more constructive participation in promoting and maintaining peace and security in Africa (The State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China, 2021). Though, only time will tell if Washington or Beijing keeps their promises if the relations between them further worsen, adopting a common narrative of security cooperation while allowing autonomy to the regions can be taken as positives.

Conclusion

Since many secondary states rely on external sources of military power, their alignment behavior is bound to impact their ability to handle security challenges. The effect will be especially dire for fragile states that have not yet built independent security capabilities. To be sure, the purpose of this article is certainly not to suggest that secondary states should continue to be dependent on major powers for security. In fact, it is far beyond the purview of this paper to come up with a regional grand strategy. If one policy recommendation that can be derived from the discussion above, it is only that major powers, in drafting their security policy, need to prioritize a humanitarian agenda that they advocate on diplomatic forums.

In the face of Ukrainian crisis, and a possibility of strategic alliance between China and Russia, alignment politics in vast regions like the Indo-Pacific and Africa is likely to become more important than they have been in the past. However, as it stands, limited alignment strategy continues to be preponderant in the current security environment. The implication of this strategy therefore needs to be carefully considered, particularly when it comes to the fragile states in the regions.

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Conservation Conundrum: Examining the Conflict Between Local Population and Conservation Efforts in Kenya

By Mohammed Harun

Abstract

This article examines the complex and multifaceted issue of conflict between the local population and conservation efforts in Kenya, and the subsequent threats it poses to security. The realization of sustaining Kenya's natural capital in the form of natural resources and biodiversity within the complex ecosystems, woven as they are into the very fabric of development, is fundamental to enduring prosperity. Though implementing conservation policies frequently causes conflict with nearby populations who depend upon those very assets as a means of income. This article analyzes the legal aspects, challenges, and potential solutions to mitigate these conflicts and safeguard security in Kenya.

Introduction

Due to the abundant biodiversity and diverse ecosystems found within Kenya's borders, safeguarding the environment has become an integral and unavoidable aspect of any sustainable development initiatives undertaken in the region. Kenya, a country renowned for its natural beauty, is inhabited by majestic wildlife, from elephants and prides of lions to graceful giraffes and rhinos protected in prehistoric plate. It is also blessed with dramatic landscapes, from great forests and parks to a coastline touched by a blue sea and caressed by soft white sand. Kenya's pioneering creation of its initial wildlife sanctuaries and protected natural areas in the early 20th Century inaugurated an enduring dedication to preserving the nation's ecological legacy. To safeguard its invaluable natural legacy, the nation instituted measures intended to conserve both the fauna inhabiting its territories as well as the environments they called home. Through multifaceted preservation efforts that fortified natural habitats within their realm, the renowned Maasai Mara-Serengeti ecosystem and additional national parks of significant repute have been cultivated.

Through the adoption over recent decades of an elaborate network of legislation and official directives crafted to safeguard its abundance of natural resources, Kenya has achieved substantial strides in the domain of conservation. The Wildlife Conservation and Management Act of 2013 and the Environmental Management and Coordination Act of 1999 provide legal frameworks for conservation and environmental protection. Though valiant attempts have been undertaken, a multiplicity of difficulties with respect to preservation continue to plague Kenya. These difficulties include the disharmony between humans and wildlife, the illicit trafficking of fauna, the extinction of natural environments, and fluctuations in the climate. Although competitions over land and resources frequently emerge between indigenous groups and wildlife preservation groups, the root causes often lie in the latter's habitual failure to sufficiently engage the former during critical decision-making. The intricacies underlying conservation initiatives in Kenya grant crucial insight into the distinctions fueling tensions between indigenous groups and preservation campaigns. This underlines the necessity of ecologically and societally sustainable methodologies that reconcile the interests of both environmental custodianship and local inhabitants.

Significance of local population involvement in conservation efforts

The sustained viability of conservation measures is dependent upon cultivating investment from those dwelling within proximity to the targeted location. This investment will determine the endurance of such endeavors. Though intricately bound with the lands they inhabit through reliance on natural resources and age-old traditions, communities surrounding conservation areas frequently find their collective welfare and cultural heritage deeply intertwined with local ecosystems (Cariño

Women planting mangroves seedlings from their nurseries in Kwale County as a way of establishing alternative sustainable source of income (Photo credit: Kang-Chun Cheng)

& Ferrari, 2021). Therefore, their active participation and engagement are crucial for achieving conservation goals while addressing their needs and concerns.

Local communities possess valuable traditional knowledge about the environment, biodiversity, and sustainable resource management practices (Dawson et al., 2021). Handed down intergenerationally, the accumulated wisdom comprising their traditional ecological knowledge offers profound insights into the complex interrelationships within ecosystems, the complex behaviors of species, and the sustainable harnessing of natural resources. Incorporating this knowledge into conservation strategies can enhance the effectiveness and adaptability of initiatives. By involving them in conservation efforts, their livelihood needs can be integrated into the decision-making process. In order to guarantee that protective actions aimed at safeguarding the environment are tailored to reduce unfavorable influences on the means of subsistence of those dwelling locally while simultaneously encouraging economically viable and ecologically prudent prospects.

When local communities become actively engaged in conservation initiatives, a sense of custodianship over the natural environs and resources indigenous to their locale may arise. Through creating awareness, promoting social

value changes, and instilling an informed understanding of why conservation matters, compliance with regulations is more apt to increase, illicit activities diminish, and safeguarding of natural resources prove more effectual. Involving local populations in conservation also fosters a sense of pride and identity, strengthening their commitment to safeguarding their natural heritage.

Engaging local communities in conservation initiatives promotes social cohesion and community empowerment. Through cultivating an exchange of perspectives, building common ground, and fostering partnerships between varied actors such as wildlife defenders, public institutions, and those dwelling within the locale, it enables open communication, empathic comprehension, and cooperative effort. By engaging stakeholders in an interactive process of shared decision making and collaborative problem solving, this method of inclusive participation has the potential to mitigate disagreements, ease anxieties, and cultivate reciprocal goodwill and esteem.

Overview of the security threats arising from conflicts

Conflicts between local populations and conservation initiatives in Kenya give rise to a range of security threats,

affecting both human security and wildlife conservation efforts (Nyumba et al., 2020). The complex interplay between these diverse dangers foretells consequences of the gravest import for the individual and collective welfare, not to mention the balance, of all those inhabiting this location. An overview of the security threats arising from such conflicts is as follows:

Conflict over land, resources, and conservation policies can escalate into social unrest and violence. Disputes that often simmer between local communities, conservation groups advocating their agendas, and government officials attempting to balance both interests not uncommonly reach a boiling point, erupting into heated clashes, impassioned protests, and, in the most extreme and lamentable cases, even armed confrontations of a violent nature. The precarious circumstances which arise due to such dangerous actions gravely jeopardize both the physical and psychological well-being of those unfortunate souls trapped within the nexus of the uproar, whilst simultaneously rending the delicate fabric of peacefulness and agreement within the domains so affected.

Conservation measures may result in the displacement of local communities from their ancestral lands or traditional resource-use areas. The mass emigration of large groups of populations from their places of origin and habitual residence to strange lands can engender tremendous financial difficulties, the dissolution of time-honored modes of employment and subsistence, and an enhancement of vulnerability to harm. Disrupted livelihoods and a lack of alternative income sources can exacerbate poverty, social tensions, and ultimately threaten security.

Conservation efforts frequently entail establishing protected habitats where humans and wild creatures may dwell in close quarters. The closeness of these communities to wildlife habitats can frequently lead to tensions arising between the groups, particularly when the local fauna inflict harm upon agricultural yields, domesticated animals, or endanger human life in some capacity (Yussuf, 2021). Human-wildlife conflict can escalate tensions, result in reciprocal killings, and compromise conservation objectives. Conflicts and insecurity provide opportunities for criminal activities, such as poaching, the illegal wildlife trade, and smuggling. Local populations, frustrated by their limited involvement in conservation benefits, may resort to poaching as a means of economic survival. This

not only threatens wildlife populations but also fuels illicit networks, organized crime, and undermines efforts to combat wildlife trafficking. Conflicts can undermine conservation initiatives, making it difficult to implement and enforce regulations effectively. Security concerns may divert resources and attention away from conservation activities, weakening the capacity to protect wildlife and manage natural resources sustainably.

Legal Framework for Conservation in Kenya

Analysis of relevant national and international laws

Though Kenya has established an extensive legal system nationally and internationally to govern preservation initiatives and defend its natural assets, the country struggles with enforcement. The intricate web of legislation furnishes the foundation upon which the preservation and judicious governance of biological diversity, fauna, woodlands, and additional ecologies rest. An analysis of the relevant national and international laws related to conservation in Kenya is discussed below:

a) National Laws

The Wildlife Conservation and Management Act (WCMA) (2013): The WCMA is the primary legislation governing wildlife conservation in Kenya. It regulates the conservation, management, and sustainable use of wildlife resources. The Act establishes protected areas, outlines wildlife offenses and penalties, and provides for community participation in wildlife management.

The Environmental Management and Coordination Act (EMCA) (1999): The EMCA is comprehensive environmental legislation in Kenya. The complex legal framework that establishes regulations for environmental impact assessments and natural resource management, as well as emphasizes mechanisms to curb pollution, is

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hereby encapsulated. To preserve biodiversity and the interdependent web of life in various ecosystems, the legislation provides multifaceted measures.

The Forest Conservation and Management Act (FCMA) (2016). The FCMA focuses on the conservation, management, and sustainable use of forests in Kenya. It addresses issues related to forest reserves, logging, afforestation, and community participation in forest management.

Water Act (2016): The Water Act governs the management and use of water resources in Kenya. The legislation establishes stipulations shielding and preserving river basins, waterways, and marshlands indispensable for sustaining ecological communities and biological diversity.

Land Laws: In an intricately woven legislative web of statutes governing land in Kenya, notably the Land Act passed in 2012 and the Community Land Act of 2016, provisions relevant to conservation efforts within the country can be found. The complex regulations govern matters pertaining to the possession and utilization of territory, the collective entitlements of the populace to land, and the official acknowledgement of ownership of the land by groups, elements that are indispensable for the participation of indigenous populations in preservation efforts.

b) International laws

Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD): Although Kenya accedes to the Convention on Biological Diversity, an accord targeting incentivizing the preservation of natural diversity, judicious utilization of biological assets, and impartial as well as evenhanded allotment of advantages has accrued. The CBD provides a framework for implementing biodiversity conservation strategies and measures.

Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES): Though Kenya

is a signatory to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, which oversees the global exchange of imperiled plant and animal life, its protection efforts remain rudimentary. The agreement provides controls and regulations to prevent illegal trade and protect wildlife species.

These national laws and international conventions provide a robust legal framework for conservation in Kenya. However, challenges remain in implementing and enforcing these laws effectively. While the multitude of complex challenges inherent in reconciling competing priorities must be navigated to achieve the aspirations of legislation and ensure perpetual preservation of natural heritage, a compelling case can still be made for cautious optimism.

Examination of legal rights and protections for local communities

Although Kenya has enacted laws and established protections aiming to uphold the well-being of indigenous groups vis-à-vis conservation initiatives undertaken within their ancestral lands. These core philosophies of participatory governance, which are enshrined by such legislation, acknowledge the necessity of engaging and enabling grassroots populations through their involvement in the determination of policy choices that shape their ability to sustain their own welfare and progress in a lasting manner. An examination of the legal rights and protections for local communities in Kenya is as follows:

Article 69 of the Constitution of Kenya 2010 provides that the State shall:

(a) Ensure sustainable exploitation, utilization, management and conservation of the environment and natural resources, and ensure the equitable sharing of the accruing benefits;

(b) Work to achieve and maintain a tree cover of at least ten per cent of the land area of Kenya;

(c) Protect and enhance intellectual property in, and indigenous knowledge of, biodiversity and the genetic resources of the communities;

(d) Encourage public participation in the management, protection and conservation of the environment;

(e) Protect genetic resources and biological diversity;

(f) Establish systems of environmental impact assessment, environmental audit and monitoring of the environment;

(g) Eliminate processes and activities that are likely to endanger the environment; and

(h) Utilise the environment and natural resources for the benefit of the people of Kenya.

(2) Every person has a duty to cooperate with State organs and other persons to protect and conserve the environment and ensure ecologically sustainable development and use of natural resources.

Article 40 guarantees the right to own property, including communal land, and safeguards against unlawful deprivation of property.

The Community Land Act (2016) provides for the recognition, protection, and management of community land, which includes lands traditionally owned, managed, or used by communities. It establishes mechanisms for the registration and administration of community land, allowing communities to have legal rights and control over their ancestral lands. With a bold flourish, these legal protections are engineered to establish the indispensable latitude for enfranchised collectives to pronounce upon determinations impacting the terrain, materials, and prosperity under their purview.

The recognition of community rights, the establishment of community-based conservancies, and the emphasis on equitable benefit-sharing mechanisms aim to address historical injustices, promote social justice, and empower local communities in Kenya.

Mukogodo Forest rangers (Yaaku Clan) in Laikipia County, keep guard over florah and fauna at the elephant sight seeing pathway (Photo Credit: Kang-Chun Cheng)

Assessing the adequacy of existing legal frameworks

A determination as to whether the complexity of the current legal mechanisms established in Kenya for environmental preservation is sufficiently sophisticated to adequately deal with the multitude of difficulties presented and ultimately accomplish the intended goals of safeguarding natural resources is sorely needed. Although the nation has constructed an inclusive set of laws, various elements demand deliberation.

One critical aspect is the effective implementation and enforcement of existing laws. Although adequate resources, capacity-building, and coordination among the relevant government agencies involved are imperative to guarantee that the legislation is efficiently implemented in practice. A lack of enforcement can undermine the intended protections for local communities and biodiversity.

While legal provisions recognize the rights of local communities, including their participation and consent in decision-making processes, the practical implementation of these principles needs further improvement. Although securing access to information, truly meaningful participation, and the exercise of uncoerced consent continues proving elusive for some groups, legislative constructs should incorporate rigorous dispute-resolution processes to reconcile differences emerging between indigenous populations, conservation bodies and government agencies. While mechanisms for resolving disputes and protecting rights should undoubtedly be devised, establishing intersectoral legal harmony and integration demands our utmost efforts to safeguard stakeholders and remedy conflicts with alacrity. Inconsistencies or conflicts between laws can create challenges in implementing effective conservation strategies and may lead to confusion and overlapping responsibilities among various agencies.

Penalties and deterrents for unlawful acts pertaining to poaching, illicit commerce, habitat ravaging, and other criminal offenses against preservation ought to be gauged. Compelling and fitting consequences can function as disincentives and act as deterrents to both the diversity of life and nearby populations. Sufficient allotment of fiscal means, staffing, and technical aptitude is essential to the effective execution of conservation statutes. Deficient resources and capability can constrain

the faculty of official bodies to impose rules, carry out observation and investigation, and furnish aid to proximate collectives. Legal frameworks should be adaptable to changing circumstances, such as emerging conservation challenges, evolving social dynamics, and new scientific knowledge. Regular reviews and updates of existing laws and policies can ensure that they remain relevant, effective, and responsive to emerging issues.

Causes of Conflict between Local Population and Conservation

Conflict between the local population and conservation initiatives in Kenya can arise due to various causes. Understanding these causes is crucial for addressing the underlying issues and promoting sustainable solutions.

First, land ownership and tenure disputes are common causes of conflict. Initiatives aimed at the preservation of natural resources could potentially culminate in the designation of ecologically regulated zones or limitations placed upon the exploitation of assets, thereby forcing indigenous populations off of ancestral holdings or depriving them of long-held rights to the land and the bounty it provides. Inadequate recognition of customary land rights and insufficient consultation and compensation processes can fuel resentment and conflicts.

Second, conservation measures, such as the creation of protected areas or restrictions on resource extraction, can disrupt traditional livelihood practices, such as agriculture, grazing, or fishing (Ouma & Stadel, 2021). When communities rely heavily on these activities for their sustenance, restrictions can lead to economic hardships and increased poverty. Inadequate alternative livelihood options and a lack of economic benefits from conservation initiatives can exacerbate tensions between local communities and conservation entities.

Third, the attitudes of local communities toward conservation are shaped in large part by the intricate network of cultural values, spiritual beliefs, and long-held traditions that govern human relationships with the natural world. Conflicts may arise when conservation practices clash with cultural norms or when there is a lack of cultural sensitivity in conservation approaches. The complex interplay between societal relationships, especially the unequal distribution of influence and the systematic isolation of particular segments, frequently acts as a catalyst for friction and clashes.

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Fourth, insufficient involvement of local communities in decision-making processes related to conservation can breed resentment and conflicts. As feelings of exclusion from discourses surrounding their territories and assets insinuate themselves into collectives, faith in the system withers and dissent festers. Effective communication channels, meaningful engagement, and the inclusion of diverse perspectives are essential for fostering collaboration and addressing conflicts.

Fifth, the perception that the benefits derived from conservation initiatives are not equitably shared among local communities can contribute to conflicts. If communities do not see tangible improvements in their well-being or if benefits primarily flow to external stakeholders, it can lead to grievances and resistance.

Security Implications of Conflict

Conflict between the local population and conservation initiatives in Kenya have had significant security implications. The complex interdependencies between the implications of these factors on community resilience and cohesion, ongoing wildlife conservation initiatives, and the potential rise of illicit poaching groups and the black-market wildlife trade industry are multifaceted and far-reaching (Muok et al., 2021). These divisive struggles could potentially undermine the prosperity and continuity of tight-knit populations in close proximity. After being compelled to flee their dwellings, stripped of the means by which they had traditionally sustained themselves, and severed from the natural provisions they had always depended upon, it is common for a threatening spiral of intensifying hardship, escalating uncertainty regarding the derivation of their subsequent meal, and cooking anxiety that can boil over into civic chaos to emerge. Although communities may struggle to fulfill essential requirements, exacerbating strains could culminate in disruptive outbreaks and a frayed social fabric.

Conflict between local communities and conservation initiatives have hindered wildlife conservation efforts. Conservation activities require community cooperation and support for the effective protection of biodiversity and ecosystems. However, conflicts can create hostility and resistance, making it difficult to implement conservation measures and enforce regulations. Despite the best of intentions, conservation initiatives that fail to actively engage local communities through their voluntary participation and cooperation often struggle to safeguard wildlife species and the habitats upon which they depend.

The conflicts have also created an environment conducive to criminal activities, particularly in relation to wildlife. In places afflicted by enduring turmoil, clandestine enterprises like furtive hunting, surreptitious deforestation, and illicit trafficking of wildlife are apt to burgeon. Shrugging off lawful constraints out of financial desperation or feelings of unfair treatment, the populations of some areas may resort to forbidden means of getting by or seizing control over assets. These activities further deplete wildlife populations, disrupt ecosystems, and can involve organized criminal networks that exploit the conflict situation.

An unresolved conflict can spiral rapidly out of control into a vicious cycle of retaliation and counter-retaliation, culminating in a dangerous intensification of aggression. When locals feel their freedoms and means of survival imperiled by preservation efforts, the possibility emerges for aggressive clashes. Despite the paradoxically dangerous complexity of safeguarding endangered species and curtailing poaching, the endeavors to do so, which are undertaken with the decent of intentions by both conservationists and law enforcement officials alike striving to protect nature and humanity, can place at grave risk not only the lives of local environmental advocates but also those sworn to uphold the law.

Conflict also erodes trust between local communities and conservation entities, hindering cooperation and collaboration. When conflicts persist, it becomes challenging to establish constructive relationships and meaningful dialogue. Trust is essential for effective implementation of conservation measures, sharing of information, and building partnerships. The breakdown of trust can impede progress in achieving conservation goals and undermine security efforts.

Case Studies and Analysis

Case Study 1: The Sengwer Indigenous Community and the Embobut Forest

One notable conflict in Kenya is between the Sengwer indigenous community and conservation efforts in the Embobut Forest. Since 2009 the Sengwer tribe has been systematically targeted and violently evicted from Embobut forest by the Kenyan Forest Service guards (KFS) as part of the government's conservation efforts (Cheruiyot, 2019. Conserving the ecosystem is important – but surely not at the cost of an entire community and their livelihoods? The Sengwer have inhabited the forest for generations and rely on it for their livelihoods. Despite implementing a well-intentioned conservation plan, the Kenya Forest Service's actions resulted in the unfortunate eviction and restriction of the Sengwer people from the fertile land they called home. As tensions rose and tempers spreading, the disharmony intensified, culminating in demonstrations, brutality, and infringements of civil liberties.

Legal Response and Outcome: The case received international attention and led to legal action. In 2013, the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights issued an interim measure demanding a halt to evictions and the protection of the Sengwer's rights. Additionally, in 2017, the Kenyan High Court issued an injunction ordering the KFS to refrain from evicting the Sengwer without following due process. Though legal remedies have been interposed to temper hostilities, underlying animosities endure relentless in the absence of a comprehensive resolution.

Lessons Learned and Potential Strategies: Genuine participation of local communities in decision-making processes is crucial. Engaging the Sengwer in collaborative forest management and recognizing their rights and traditional knowledge can promote effective conservation and resolve conflicts. An understanding of the complex interrelationships between conservation initiatives and local socioeconomic realities must inform the strategic and sensitive design and implementation of those initiatives. Adequate consultation, dialogue, and negotiation can help build trust and find mutually beneficial solutions. While reinforcing legal provisions safeguarding the privileges of native populations is crucial, modifying legislative procedures to fortify the protections of aboriginal groups' entitlements proves fundamentally necessary. Ensuring that laws recognize customary land rights and provide avenues for redress when violations occur can help prevent conflicts and address grievances.

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Case Study 2: Conflict between Maasai Pastoralists and Wildlife Conservation

Another significant conflict arises between Maasai pastoralists and wildlife conservation initiatives in Kenya. The Maasai have traditionally grazed their livestock on vast lands that now encompass national parks and wildlife reserves. Conflicts arise due to restrictions on grazing and water access, wildlife attacks on livestock, and the perception that conservation benefits primarily external stakeholders (Hemingway et al., 2022).

Legal Response and Outcome: The Wildlife Conservation and Management Act of 2013 includes provisions recognizing the rights of local communities and requires the establishment of wildlife conservancies, allowing communities to benefit from conservation. However, challenges remain in implementing these provisions effectively, and conflicts persist.

Lessons Learned and Potential Strategies: First, promoting community-based conservation models that involve Maasai communities in decision-making and provide direct benefits can foster positive relationships. Wildlife conservancies that empower local communities and enable them to manage and benefit from wildlife resources have shown promise in resolving conflicts. Second, developing fair and transparent compensation mechanisms for livestock losses due to wildlife attacks can help alleviate conflicts. Ensuring that compensation is provided promptly and in a manner that reflects the value of the lost livestock can address the economic grievances of the Maasai. Third, integrating land use planning that balances the needs of both wildlife conservation and pastoralism is crucial. Identifying areas for grazing, maintaining wildlife corridors, and providing water sources can minimize conflicts and support both conservation and pastoralist livelihoods.

Zebras stroll past a cluster of cattle on the Kenyan savanna by a Maasai pastoralist, in Kajiado County (Photo Credit: Felix Oppenheim).

Conclusion

With conflicts arising between Kenyans living close to wildlife areas and the groups seeking to protect endangered species therein producing considerable consequences for stability, communal welfare, and the preservation of animals indigenous to the region, Key findings highlight the importance of recognizing and respecting human rights, promoting community engagement, and adopting conflict-sensitive conservation practices. The legal frameworks in Kenya provide a foundation for conservation, but their implementation and effectiveness require further evaluation.

Policy implications include the need for inclusive decision-making processes, equitable benefit-sharing, and the integration of conservation and security concerns. Strengthening legal protections for local communities and addressing land tenure issues are also essential. Future research would greatly benefit from delving into comprehending the intricate tapestry of societal, financial, and cultural influences that fuel disputes, in addition to assessing the consequences and efficacy of the approaches employed to defuse them.

Moving forward, sustainable coexistence between local populations and conservation efforts in Kenya requires a comprehensive approach. It involves building trust, promoting dialogue, and finding synergistic solutions that address both conservation and community security concerns. Through concerted partnership across conservation alliances, regulatory bodies, indigenous populations, and invested groups, the realization of enduring solutions may come to realization. By prioritizing community engagement, upholding human rights, and fostering partnerships, Kenya can ensure that conservation efforts are not only environmentally sound but also socially just and beneficial for all stakeholders involved.

Recommendations

1. To bridge conservation ideals and community interests, generate channels for discourse and counseling with inhabitants native to the land. Proactively solicit their perspectives, heed their uncertainties, and incorporate them in choosing which course to take regarding preservation endeavors (Mureithi et al., 2019). This propels clarity, cultivates faith, and guarantees selections

that mirror the wants and ambitions of the population.

2. Ensure that local communities receive fair and equitable benefits from conservation efforts (Woodside et al., 2021). This can include revenue-sharing, employment opportunities, access to resources, and capacity-building programs. Equitable benefit-sharing enhances the sense of ownership and incentivizes communities to actively participate in conservation activities.

3. Support capacity-building initiatives that empower local communities to actively engage in conservation efforts. This can involve providing training on sustainable resource management, alternative livelihood options, and conservation education. Strengthening community capacities enhances their ability to participate effectively and contributes to long-term conservation success.

4. Local groups should come together to collaborate and reach mutually favorable goals. Cooperative arrangements that honor everyone's input can lead to outcomes from which all parties benefit. Promoting open communication, collective choice, and cooperative action on preservation efforts will strengthen teamwork and partnership.

5. Mediation can play a crucial role in resolving conflicts between local communities and conservation organizations. The involvement of neutral mediators can help facilitate constructive dialogue, identify common interests, and develop mutually agreeable solutions. By implementing more flexible resolution methods like local community mediation services or binding arbitration, resolutions that adequately address the interests and apprehensions of all parties can be achieved.

6. Building trust is essential for resolving conflicts and fostering cooperation. Trust can be built through consistent and transparent communication, active listening, and demonstrating a genuine commitment to addressing community concerns. Regular engagement and dialogue platforms should be established to provide opportunities for open discussions, information sharing, and collaborative decision-making.

7. Integrating conservation and security concerns can lead to more holistic solutions. Recognizing the linkages between conservation, community well-being, and security, approaches that address socioeconomic issues, livelihood challenges, and governance gaps can help alleviate conflicts and enhance security (Mugo et al., 2022). The ongoing provision of sustainable livelihood prospects, coupled with a concerted crackdown on poaching and trafficking through strengthened law enforcement, as well as policies tailored to remedy deep-seated socioeconomic inequities behind the demand for illicit wildlife products, constitutes a multi-pronged strategy to counter this threat.

8. Conservation initiatives should be designed and implemented in a conflict-sensitive manner. This involves conducting thorough conflict assessments, considering potential impacts on local communities, and designing mitigation measures to avoid or minimize conflicts. Working towards building a more participatory and equitable conservation model, conservation organizations could reimagine current structures and dynamics by embracing inclusive decision-making processes involving local, marginalized voices, pursuing meaningful engagement to foster symbiotic relationships with the communities whose environments they aim to protect, and equitable sharing not just of responsibilities but also of benefits accrued, all to ensure that the wellbeing and dignity of people are placed at the heart of conservation efforts.

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Scramble of the 21st Century Horn: The Spillover Effect of Unstable Horn of Africa

By Sarah M. Musau, Ph.D.

The Horn of Africa is a multifaceted sub-region of Africa, characterized by external and internal rivalries, drought, territorial conflicts, and diverse civilizations. It serves as a trading hub and hosts peacekeeping missions and intergovernmental organizations such as the African Union and Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD). The region attracts foreign powers, leading to persistent security dilemmas. Domination by individual states affects civilians, resulting in recurring interstate and intrastate conflicts. This article discusses the source of conflicts in the region, including the Nile River conflict, where colonialism and control over the Nile have been factors. The author explores conflict dynamics in Ethiopia, a country never colonized, faced conflicts with Eritrea and Somalia, including the fight against Al-Shabaab and Djibouti, a key ally of Ethiopia, which experienced conflicts with Eritrea over border disputes, impacted by sanctions and historical injustices. The author argues that in order to stabilize the Horn of Africa region, the countries should unite under regional organizations, foster trust through compromise and acceptance of history, and prioritize people-led democracy. In addition, the author notes that supporting IGAD in addressing drought and famine is crucial, and a historical perspective in conflict resolution can address underlying colonialism-related issues.

Introduction

The Horn of Africa sub-region is a battleground for external and internal rivalries, drought-stricken, home to territorial conflicts and diverse civilizations, and a trading hub. It is also a host of peacekeeping missions and intergovernmental organizations, namely the African Union and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD). The Horn attracts many foreign powers where security dilemmas continue to persist. Internally, each state strives to dominate the region. The dominance, directly and indirectly, affects the civilians, with interstate and intrastate conflicts recurring. The spillover effect of these conflicts is the displacement of civilians to each other's country, loss of lives, mass drought, transfer of diseases, a strain of receiving state resources, and exchange of knowledge and skills. Unfortunately, some of the Horn's countries and foreign powers use the displacement/refugee crisis to exercise control. To them, the refugee crisis is a means to dominate by supporting the economic or/and political needs of the host and even sometimes of the sending country. The support of these needs means these powers establish their military base or take control of a particular resource. These countries apply a realistic ideology where the state with more power controls international politics and have to do whatever it takes to survive and define/guard its self-interests (Korab-Karpowicz, 2018).

Geographically, the Horn of Africa is strategically located and one of the 4th largest peninsulas spreading into the Indian Ocean, Gulf of Aden, and the Red Sea. The Ethiopian Plateau's highlands, the Ogaden Desert of Somalia, and the beaches of Eritrea attract much attention from the new and old external powers, including the Gulf states, China, Russia, some African states, and the West countries. Controlling the Red Sea is a priority for the Gulf states, forcing their way in and "transposing internal rivalries onto a fragile region" (Crisis Group, 2019). Further, the Horn is a gateway to the world, "The dual status of the Horn of Africa as a component of both the African and Indian Ocean World makes it a contact zone par excellence. It also provides fertile opportunities to advance understanding of the historiography of oceans, islands, port towns, and hinterlands" (Mickleburgh, 2021, p. 1).

Many factors compound Horn's history, but the most important is the legacy of colonialism, especially the drawing of borders that has continued destabilizing the Horn countries. When the colonialists invaded the region, they drew "temporary borders," which up to now are yet to be defined and have led to severe conflicts among the Horn's countries. In this region, the territory has a relation with political identity. "… states strongly identify with

Russia Navy frigate in Port Sudan, 2021. Sudan gives a green light for the construction of a Russian naval base on the Red Sea. The agreement between Moscow and Khartoum in February 13, 2023 will allow Russia to appear on one of the busiest sea routes in the world, (Photo credit: Agenzia Nova)

particular political identities—the nation, which often gives rise to violent contestation. The process of drawing the boundaries of the political community since the end of colonialism in the Horn of Africa is often accompanied by violent conflict. This conflict becomes invariably focused on the state because it is in the latter that power is concentrated, and whoever has access to state power, has access to state resources" (Matshanda, 2022, p. 2). External powers tend to use this identity fragility to create an unstable Horn, dominating and ceasing more resources. According to Ylonen (2022), "Despite recent efforts to propel economic development, external players in the Horn of Africa have often engaged in rivalries that have had destabilising consequences for the wider region. Their involvement in the Horn of Africa has mostly been adventurous and self-serving without much concern for the repercussions of their actions. Meanwhile, local state and non-state actors have taken advantage of foreign interests to strengthen their position" (para. 2). As a result, the external powers "have entered into periodic power rivalries while seeking to influence the political, economic and social development of the local states and societies. However, although external involvement over recent decades has encouraged economic development, the competition between foreign powers for influence and local actors' exploitation of such rivalries have favoured the persistence of endemic political instability in the Horn of Africa" (Ylonen, 2022, para. 4).

The Horn countries also belong to different regional organizations: the African Union, Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa, the East African Community, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, the Gulf Cooperation Council, the Indian Ocean Rim Association, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, the League of Arab States, the Nile Basin Initiative (NBI) and the Organization of the Islamic Conference. These organizations often have overlapping memberships and mandates whose participation means little contribution, divided attention, and a field to the security dilemma. Different membership also means a strain on these states' resources as they have to send their contribution as stipulated in the governing documents. Mistrust, disunity, and self-interests make the Horn an easier target to control from all directions.

> "Geographically, the Horn of Africa is strategically located and one of the 4th largest peninsulas spreading into the Indian Ocean, Gulf of Aden, and the Red Sea

The History of the Horn and Spillover Effect

The history of Horn's countries is relatively different from each other and should, therefore, be approached keenly. They share some similarities but are also diverse in many aspects, including politics, culture, language, religion, and history. One of the similarities is the porous borders "thrown up by colonial treaties, which separated local population groups and forced them to live in territories of distinct political entities. As a result, the Somalis, for example, were divided among today's Somalia, Djibouti, Ethiopia, and Kenya" (Ylonen, 2022, para 8). Colonialism drew up borders and influenced the Horn's way of life, especially the political entity. "Various European administrative cultures, together with authoritarianism, marginalization, exclusion, and violence, left a deep wound that has continued to fester since decolonisation. Although not formally colonised, imperial Ethiopia, a largely agrarian feudal polity, also continued with the tradition of autocratic governance" (Ylonen, 2022, para 8).

The other shared similarity is the persistent drought that led to the establishment of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) to mitigate this menace. This drought continue to "disrupt livelihoods and resulted in massive displacement and dependence on external food aid. However, the necessary assistance has not been forthcoming, resulting in a failure to prevent famine-like conditions taking hold in parts of the African sub-region" (Ylonen, 2022, para 8).

Although we have the AU and IGAD here, they are yet to establish themselves as trustworthy partners; after all, intergovernmental organizations are tools of states and, unfortunately, cannot dictate to others and can be used as they intend to. For instance, Egypt and Sudan rejected AU as the mediator in the Nile River conflict (Musau, 2021), raising concerns over trustworthy of the

AU. A renowned realist was right when he said, "… international organizations are a tool of states to be used when desired; they can increase or decrease the power of states, … Most realist theorists do not claim that international cooperation is impossible, only that there are few incentives for states to enter into international arrangements and that they can always exit such arrangements with little difficulty. … To most realists, deterrence and balance of power have proven more effective in maintaining peace than have international institutions" (Karns & Mingst, 2010).

1. Ethiopia

Ethiopia, a key Horn country, was never colonized, unlike Eritrea, Djibouti, and Somalia, which the Italians, French, and British colonized (Ylonen, 2022). These countries lived the colonizer's "forced" culture and life. What sets Ethiopia apart from others is the defeat of the Italians at the Battle of Adwa, "causing outrage in Europe, and then annexed Somali-inhabited Ogaden and Haud, which Britain ceded as a reward for Ethiopian support against raiding Somali groups" (Ylonen, 2022). Notably, the effects of colonialism left the Horn unstable especially dividing people who had lived in one country through the demarcation of borders. The most known is the Ethiopia-Eritrea border, where Ethiopia refused to accept Eritrea's sovereignty as demarcated by the Italians Musau (2021). The then Ethiopian Emperor Haile Selassie in a quest to acquire more power, annexed different parts of Eritrea that would later lead to one of the longest grave territorial conflicts popularly known as the Badme war (Ylonen, 2022). Strikingly, the foreign powers, the UN, and the AU remained reluctant to condemn the annexation of Eritrea, which was in contravention of international law:

> All Members shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state or in any other manner inconsistent with the Purposes of the United Nations. (Musau, 2021)

The effect of this war was a mass displacement of civilians from both countries to the neighboring countries such as Djibouti, Somalia, and by extension, Kenya and Sudan. Further, the war led to million loss of lives, trade depletion, and animosity between both countries, as well as the attraction of foreign powers into the mix, some of whom funded rebel groups; as one scholar would state, "Unfortunately, conflicts resulting from these countries have had a foreign or ethnic hand, for instance, Egypt's "support for Somali irredentists in the Ogaden region of

Ethiopia and for the rebel Sudanese People's Liberation Army (SPLA) in southern Sudan" (Musau, 2021).

There has been an attempt to quell this conflict through legally binding treaties, which would fail until 2018 when both countries signed a Memorandum of Understanding, a non-legally binding agreement known as the Asmara Agreement. One of the scholars argues that states prefer MOUs which are "primarily for political and economic interests, unlike treaties which are for legal claims and because of their flexibility" (Musau, 2021). Shockingly, over the recent years, both these countries, who were once enemies, have teamed up against Ethiopian citizens (Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF)), a Front that occupied the majority of the political positions in government before Ethiopia's Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed rose to power (Musau, 2021). One of the differences between Abiy and TPLF is the ethnic group. His rise to power meant fewer positions, less power, and less voice for the TPLF. CNN reports that, since 2020, the conflict has left thousands of dead, and more than two million displaced and has fueled a famine (Tigray War Fast Facts. (n.d.). This conflict has made Eritrea assert its power in the region, creating further conflicts. Eritrea is reportedly

"responsible for many atrocities" in the Tigray area of Ethiopia, the home of a large rebellion in North Africa (Winslow, 2021).

Ethiopia has also engaged in other conflicts, namely Ethiopia- Somalia conflict in the 1980s and the Nile River conflict with Egypt and Sudan (Musau, 2021). In the recent past, Ethiopia led its army against the Al-Qaida-affiliated Al-Shabaab terrorist group in Somalia, later joined by other members of the African Union. Though this showed solidarity, there have been civilian casualties in Ethiopia, Uganda, Somalia, and Kenya, where terrorists have tossed bombs, killing citizens and destroying property.

The Nile River conflict has existed for decades, predominantly expressed verbally through stern warnings. The conflict is mainly between Ethiopia and Egypt, both of whom consider the Nile as their "life." As previously mentioned, colonialism contributed to the Horn's conflict, including this Nile conflict, which gave Egypt a monopoly over the Nile, ignoring other Nile states (Musau, 2023). After the end of colonialism, the Nile-sharing states embarked on going for their share, which sent fear to Egypt, as Egypt entirely depended on the

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed speak to the media at a joint news conference in Ankara, Turkey, August. 18, 2021. (Photo credit: Turkish Presidency via AP, Pool)

"Somalia has suffered a variety of multilateral sanctions since 1992. These sanctions have had a devastating impact on civilians, leading to mass displacement, harmful conflicts, terrorist attacks, starvation and drought, and clan wars"

Nile. The effect of this has been constant stern warnings raising tensions across the region, mistrust, overuse of the Nile, which would later affect the livelihoods of the Nile states, and the rise and funding of rebel groups, destabilizing the Horn further (Musau, 2023).

2. Somalia

Somalia is another Horn country with a different history. It is a clan-based state. For most of Somalia's history, it has been stateless despite its endeavor for elections. Unfortunately, most of Africa's democracy is electoral rather than liberal-based. The electoral-based system has allowed most African leaders to practice brutal and selfish rule, some of whom have ruled since independence (Musau, 2023). According to some scholars, "liberal democracy entails competition for political seats, inclusive political participation, and a level of civil and political liberties, a democracy practiced in most Western countries (Griffiths, M., O'Callaghan, T., & Roach, 2008). On the other hand, electoral democracies may hold periodic elections and thus demonstrate some measure of political competition and popular participation, but large parts of the population are often kept out of the political process. Moreover, the military and other important parts of the state are frequently isolated from democratic control, the media may be censored, and the courts may be corrupt and ineffective. In short, elections take place, but democracy has not developed in most other respects (Griffiths, M., O'Callaghan, T., & Roach, 2008).

With the end of colonial rule from the Italians and British, Somalia enjoyed nine years of peace and a democracy that its neighbors admired until Mohamed Siad Barre took over and ruled from 1969 to 1991 with an arm-twist (Musau, 2023). Barre's rule had received support from the Soviet Union, the averment of the foreign powers' hand in the instability of the Horn. In 1991, Barre was overthrown by a guerrilla group, and since then, Somalia has remained unstable. The effects of this were the self-proclamation of Somaliland and Puntland from Somalia,

who both have the support of different foreign powers internally and externally. For instance, Somaliland and Puntland have received support from such countries as Ethiopia, United Arab Emirates, and Saudi Arabia, while Somalia state from Qatar and Turkey. These forces have made Somalia a battleground for foreign influence (Ylonen, 2023).

Further, Somalia continues to experience the impact of terrorism from a major Al-Qaida-affiliated terrorist and internally organized group, the "Al-Shaabab," striving to establish an Islamic Somalia state. Though Somalia engaged in war with its neighbor Ethiopia in the 1980s, Ethiopia, the host of the African Union, led the invasion of Somalia in the fight against Al-Shabaab, who the African Union members would later join (Ylonen, 2023). As much as Ethiopia's invasion could be viewed as a drive to establish peace within the Horn, it is also a show of power and the nation's pride. *With the Al-Shabaab, could there be a foreign power funding it as a means to control Somalia's ports and its resources?*

The effect of an unstable Somalia continues to be felt internally and externally, firstly with internally displaced persons but also displacements to other neighboring countries. "Somalia has suffered a variety of multilateral sanctions since 1992. These sanctions have had a devastating impact on civilians, leading to mass displacement, harmful conflicts, terrorist attacks, starvation and drought, and clan wars" (Musau, 2020). For instance, Kenya hosts the largest refugee camp known as the Dadaab, with the majority of refugees from Somalia. In recent years, Kenya has threatened to close down the camp due to its security concerns (ReliefWeb, 2021). Kenya has experienced terrorist attacks that have left hundreds dead. Further, the refugee effect strains the host's resources and causes environmental degradation. However, the camp has been cited to promote economic development as there is an exchange of knowledge, skills, and civilizations (ReliefWeb, 2021).

China railway investment in Djibouti. The railway connects Djibouti to the Ethiopian capital of Addis Ababa (Photo credit: AFP/GETTY IMAGES)

3. Djibouti

Djibouti is a strategic country in the Horn of Africa. It is a close ally of Ethiopia, due to its port which is essential for Ethiopia's landlocked economy. Djibouti also hosts military bases from the United States, China, and other countries. However, Djibouti has also had a history of conflict with its neighbor Eritrea. The two countries have a disputed border, and there was a brief border war in 1996.

The most recent conflict was in 2008, which killed hundreds of their population and stalled trade between both countries resulting in continued poverty and mistrust (Winslow, 2021). With sanctions imposed, further effects were to be felt by the citizens, especially the Eritrea side. "The United Nations Security Council implemented a sanction on Eritrea in 2009 for its actions in the conflict and its support of militants in Somalia. The act created an embargo on arms shipment and created a travel ban within Eritrea. Eritrea denied all involvement with Somalia and engaged violently with Djibouti as the sanctions stayed" (Winslow, 2021). Unfortunately, whenever sanctions are imposed on a particular country, the effects are felt by both the perpetrator and the civilians, putting

civilians' lives in immense danger. Galtung puts it, "The collective nature of economic sanctions makes them hit the innocent along with the guilty" (Galtung, 1967).

"While Djibouti has not engaged in conflict with Eritrea since tensions reduced, the nation has still been "volatile" in the Horn of Africa. The African Report said that the Eritrea, Djibouti and Ethiopia area is "at war with itself" with many "historical injustices." With the continued Tigray conflict and Eritrea and Djibouti on either side, expectations have determined that conflict could emerge again (Winslow, 2021).

Conclusion

The Horn of Africa is a strategically located, fragile, drought-stricken, and culturally diverse region that has been a battleground for internal and foreign powers for centuries. It will take a concerted and deliberate effort by the Horn countries to create a mutual understanding and stabilize the region, and to stop throwing it as prey for others. They need to strengthen the African Union (AU) and support the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) to solve conflicts and mitigate drought-related challenges.

> The Horn countries should deliberately accept to move forward and design a democracy that fits them

Recommendations

- The Horn countries should harmonize their memberships in regional organizations, deliberately joining only a few organizations. This would reduce the security dilemma, strain on resources, and create a background for trust.

- The AU is a great platform for the Horn countries to settle their conflicts and reduce their reliance on foreign powers. They should use the AU to their advantage and create a buffer zone between the Horn and foreign powers' quest for control.

- In international politics, states are in for their self-interests. However, to live in harmony, compromise is critical. The Horn countries must accept their history and deliberately compromise some of their hard stances to accommodate each other. This can be done by signing memorandums of understanding (MOUs) that serve political and economic interests, are non-binding, and are highly preferred by states. The MOU would serve as a reference document for all the Horn countries to guide during conflicts or anytime a foreign power wants to assert its power.

- The Horn countries should deliberately accept to move forward and design a democracy that fits them. They must normalize people-led democracy. One way could be a "trial and error" of the liberal over electoral-based democracy.

- Any mediator for the Horn issues must strive to solve issues from a historical perspective rather than a peace settlement/conflict management perspective. There are many underlying issues in the Horn, especially from the legacy of colonialism.

- The Horn countries must deliberately defund and stop any support of the rebel groups who aim to destabilize other states.

- External/ foreign actors must reduce their rivalries and involve all the Horn countries and other regional players on all matters of the Horn.

- Both international and regional actors should deliberately support the IGAD to mitigate drought and starvation in the Horn.

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Editor's Note

Dear Reader,

We are excited to release our 32nd bi-monthly issue of *The HORN Bulletin* (Vol. VI, Iss. IV, 2023). We bring to you well-researched articles and analysis of topical issues and developments affecting the Horn of Africa. We welcome contributions from readers who wish to have their articles included in the HORN Bulletin. At HORN, we believe ideas are the currency of progress. Feel free to contact the Editor-in-Chief for more details at communications@horninstitute.org.

Hassan Khannenje, Ph.D.
Editor-in-Chief, The HORN Bulletin

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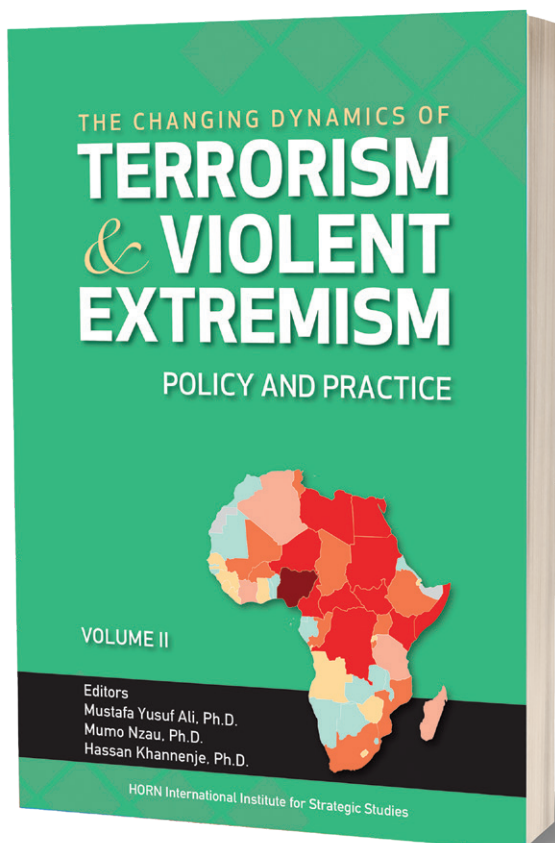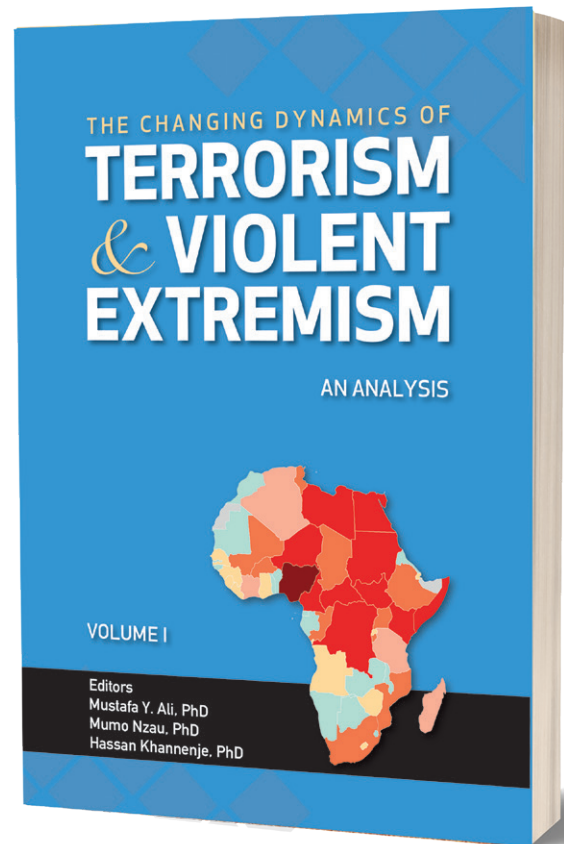
The Changing Dynamics of Terrorism and Violent Extremism: An Analysis and *The Changing Dynamics of Terrorism and Violent Extremism:* Policy and Practice.

These books contain chapters derived from researched and peer-reviewed papers presented at the international conference on terrorism and violent extremism.

The volumes' contributors comprise of leading scholars and practitioners who examine the subtleties and complexities of terrorism and violent extremism in Africa today. Some of the topics in the books include political and religious extremism; ideological dimensions; state responses to terrorism; preventing and countering violent extremism; gender and terrorism; role of schools in countering extremism; media and terrorism; terrorism financing; terrorism and human rights; critical infrastructure protection; conflict dynamics in the Gulf and the wider Middle East, and their impact in Africa; global trends in terrorism and violent extremism; terrorism, trauma and counselling; radicalization and deradicalization; and case studies from Somalia, Nigeria, Jordan, Egypt, and Syria, among others.

TAKING STOCK OF DEVOLUTION IN KENYA

From the 2010 Constitution, Through Two Election Cycles, to the BBI Process
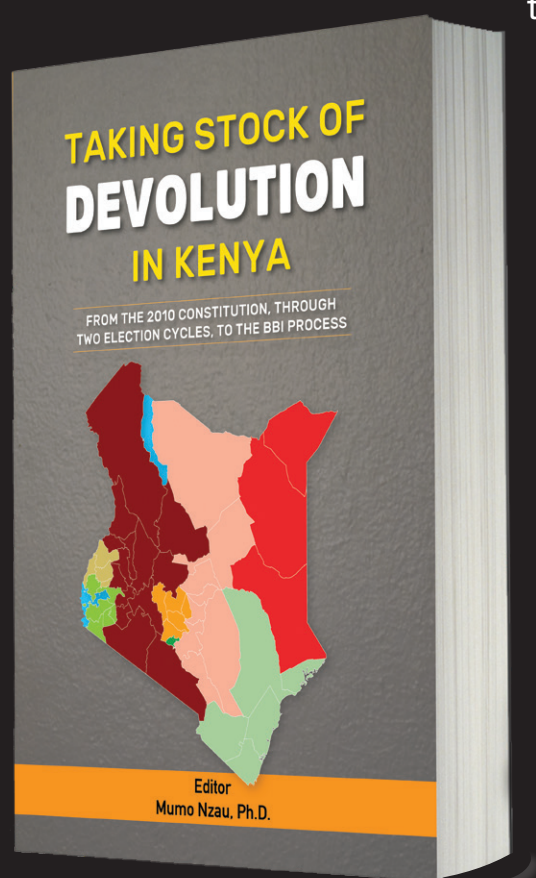
The book *'Taking Stock of Devolution in Kenya: From the 2010 Constitution, Through Two Election Cycles, to the BBI Process'*. This book volume takes stock of devolution in Kenya with specific reference to theoretical, legal, constitutional and policy, leadership, governance, and development debates as well as experiences in the 47 counties.

Its scope falls within the 2010 Constitution, through two election cycles in 2013 and again in 2017, up to the transformative change proposals presented by the Building Bridges Initiative (BBI) and the ramifications that all these issues, events and processes portend for the future of devolved governance in Kenya.
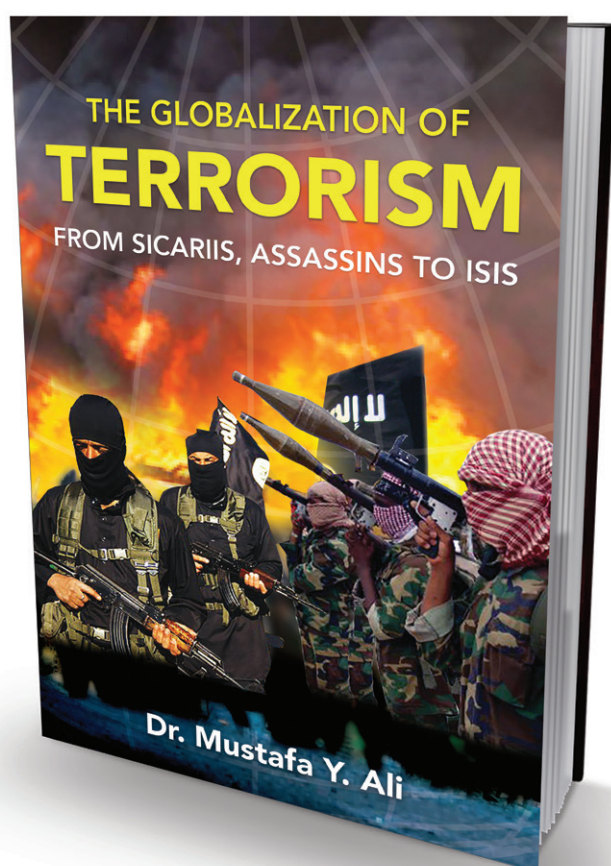
Globalization of Terrorism: From Sicariis, Assassins to ISIS is an analysis of terrorism from both historical and international relations perspectives. The book sheds light on the contentious subject of terrorism, tracking its beginnings from antiquity, to the middle ages, and its subsequent globalization in contemporary times.

The focus on contemporary terrorism intersects the dizzying pace, frequency, religionized and globalized nature of recruitment and attacks that have become major threats to national and international security.

About the HORN Institute

The HORN International Institute for Strategic Studies is a non-profit, applied research, and policy think-do tank based in Nairobi, Kenya. Its vision is a progressive Horn of Africa and the African continent, served by informed, evidence-based and problem-solving policy research and analysis. Its mission is to contribute to informed, objective, definitive research and analytical inquiry that positively informs policies of governments, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations and spaces.

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