



COMMENTARY

A framework for understanding the Horn of Africa

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1. INTRODUCTION

Africa remains a continent full of marvels and glories, juxtaposed with hardships and difficulties. Many African nations are currently experiencing economic stagnation as a result of long-standing socio-political and security challenges that people are tenaciously trying to overcome.¹ The Horn of Africa, in particular, is a sub-region that is renowned for its volatility and chaotic socio-political climate where actors at all levels continue the search for transformative change. The Horn has held historic significance as a passageway between Europe and the east, with its strategic location near the Persian Gulf, Red Sea, and Indian Ocean. Although the region is rich in ethnic and cultural diversity, there has been a lack of reciprocity and amicable interrelationships between various groups, which has

contributed to its seemingly intractable instability.² Strong nationalistic traditions and ideals are also present within the statebuilding processes of Horn countries, which have sometimes run contrary to the political philosophies of their sub-regional neighbours. It is an intensely complex environment, with tensions often exacerbated by the interference of major and newly emerging global powers.³

This commentary piece offers a framework for understanding the situations encountered in the Horn of Africa sub-region. It does not proffer solutions to its many problems or offer a detailed leadership analysis in terms of mutuality building, leader emergence or leadership effectiveness, and so forth. Instead, it offers something of a 'framework within a framework' by highlighting a series of issues and factors that must be

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¹ Popoola, Michael Akin. "The Illusion of Neoliberalism: A Construct of African Development Gap." *African and Asian Studies* 22, no. 1-2 (2023): 135-160.

² Mengistu, Muhabie Mekonnen. "The root causes of conflicts in the Horn of Africa." *American Journal of Applied Psychology* 4, no. 2 (2015): 28-34.

³ Tekle, Amare. "Peace and stability in the Horn of Africa: Problems and prospects." *Northeast African Studies* (1989): 75-108.

unpacked in order to better understand the context of the Horn and the situations encountered therein, that we believe would aid leadership theorists and practitioners. Following this introduction, the commentary begins with a short discussion on the situational starting point of a leadership as process analysis. It then outlines the 'framework within a framework' for the Horn, discussing the importance of: Structural Foundations; Marginalization and Vulnerability to Environmental Threats; Faith Based Security Threats and International Security Challenges; Legacies of War and Militarization; Changing Geopolitics and New Threats from the Gulf. It ends with a brief conclusion.

The Horn of Africa is often defined as Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, and Somalia; however, this commentary will also reference the nations of Sudan, South Sudan, Kenya, and Uganda as they are member-states of Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), the African sub-regional organization ostensibly responsible for the Horn within the African Union's African Peace and Security Architecture. The contents of this work will refer to these nations collectively and make specific points of analysis when necessary.⁴

2. LEADERSHIP STUDIES: THE IMPORTANCE OF A SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS

Leadership scholars emphasize the value of a situational analysis as the starting point for discussing potential solutions to complex security and socio-political challenges. It is necessary to understand the background context and immediate key problems that fuel instability within a particular locale.⁵ But UN Peace implementation processes typically involve pre-determined deadlines and budgets, with an underlying

assumption that a liberal democratic state is the best model for Africa. This creates a rigidity in its practices that hinder the ability to address conflict grievances and forge some semblance of unity between divided parties.⁶ It gives power and credibility to external actors who exist outside of, and fail to comprehend fully, the complexities of the situations encountered in the Horn.⁷

According to Murphy, "Leadership does not reside in a person. It is a function of the whole situation".⁸ Asking the right questions of the situation they are working within is a crucial first step for any leader to emerge and mutually create credible solutions with followers for potentially transformative change. It is therefore critical to use a leadership-as-a-process framework of analysis that insists on a detailed understanding and appreciation of the situation and problems encountered, before trying to understand how and why particular leaders may or may not emerge and what potential solutions can be offered. Olonisakin explains "the nature of the situation that confronts a group or society invariably frames the leadership experience in that context".⁹ In the same vein, Thomas contends that this situational starting point requires understanding the group members within that context, and the violent or non-violent conflict that is occurring within that situation, by asking "What is the conflict? Why is this a conflict? How did this conflict come about? How did this conflict affect the group of people?".¹⁰ This situational starting point, according to this approach, is crucial to both leadership practitioners and any scholars undertaking case study research analysis.

The absence of well-respected, high-capacity national institutions and a sense of mutual trust between assigned leaders and their community has left little

⁴ Clapham, Christopher. *The Horn of Africa: State formation and decay*. Oxford University Press, 2023; for information on IGAD see <https://igad.int/> and Weldesellassie, K. Isaac.

"IGAD as an international organization, its institutional development and shortcomings." *Journal of African Law* 55, no. 1 (2011): 1-29.

⁵ Blanchard, Kenneth H., Drea Zigarmi, and Robert B. Nelson. "Situational Leadership® after 25 years: A retrospective." *Journal of Leadership Studies* 1, no. 1 (1993): 21-36.

⁶ Olonisakin, Funmi. "Towards re-conceptualising leadership for sustainable peace." *Leadership & Developing Societies* 2, no. 1 (2017): 1-30; Olonisakin, Funmi. "Re-conceptualising

Leadership for effective peacemaking and human security in Africa." *The Strategic Review for Southern Africa* 37, no. 1 (2015).

⁷ Cliffe, Lionel. "Regional dimensions of conflict in the Horn of Africa." *Third World Quarterly* 20, no. 1 (1999): 89-111.

⁸ Murphy, Albert J. "A study of the leadership process." *American Sociological Review* (1941): 674-687, p.674

⁹ Olonisakin, "leadership for sustainable peace", p.20

¹⁰ Thomas, Grace Elizabeth. "Re-imagining the framework for leadership analysis." *Leadership & Developing Societies* 5, no. 1 (2020): 73-77, p.74

room for effective responses from formal organizations in the face of violent and latent conflicts in the Horn of Africa. But how can we begin to understand the intensely complex environment in the Horn, to then recognize the emergence of leaders who build credible solutions with followers to the myriad challenges faced (or, indeed, to become one of those leaders ourselves)? If getting this situational entry point right is so important, and we criticize powerful institutions like the UN for consistently mis-stepping and getting it wrong at this initial stage, then how to do it correctly?

3. A FRAMEWORK FOR UNDERSTANDING COMPLEXITY - THE SITUATION IN THE HORN

This commentary piece now discusses Medhane Tadesse's framework for understanding the obstacles to peace and security in the Horn of Africa.¹¹ It provides a set of thematic areas and guiding questions that can help better understand the situations that lead to conflicts across the sub-region (and beyond), whilst avoiding the one-size-fits-all logic typical of UN responses. This framework is categorized into 5 different factors that, we believe, are crucial to understanding the situational starting point of any subsequent leadership as process-based analysis.

3.1. Structural Foundations

This factor is about understanding the political, socio-economic, cultural, and geographical realities that greatly impact and often inhibit resolution to peace and statebuilding challenges encountered in the Horn. They

are 'structural' due to being omnipresent, deeply engrained, and unavoidable. The Horn's geographical position at the crossroads of Africa, the Middle East, and the Indian Ocean make it a realm of competition for resources, influence, and access to bodies of water such as the Red Sea. This area of interest to multiple parties has fostered a number of conflicts throughout history, such as, to name but a few, Napoleon's attempted invasion of Egypt, destructive wars between Ethiopia and Eritrea from the 1970s onwards, and more recent security and piracy challenges from Somalia and Yemen related to the strategic importance of maritime trade and transportation along such trade routes.¹²

Governmental institutions in the Horn have often done more to undermine than to strengthen national unity. Numerous attempts to forge peaceful ties between disparate cultural groups have been made by African elites, international interlocutors/institutions, and post-independence political leaders. These have largely failed because of the disregard for pre-colonial customary authority as a formal or even informal reference of power, which previously operated within large and mid-sized centralized kingdoms as well as widely scattered chiefdoms.¹³ The arbitrariness of borders straddling ethnic groups became a challenge to nation building (which is itself an imported notion): the Somali ethnic group are spread through a number of countries such as Somalia, Ethiopia, Kenya, and Djibouti;¹⁴ and the Karamojong people are found in the 'Karamoja triangle' region which consists of part of northeastern Uganda, South Sudan and Kenya, to name but two amongst many examples.¹⁵ No wonder, the Horn is a theatre for

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¹² Alsawalqa, Rulah Odeh, and Denis Venter. "Piracy and maritime security in the north-western Indian ocean: From the gulf of oman to the waters off the somali coast." *Insight on Africa* 14, no. 1 (2022): 88-103; Potgieter, T. D. "Maritime security in the Indian Ocean: strategic setting and features." *Institute for Security Studies Papers* 2012, no. 236 (2012): 24; Van Rooyen, Frank. "Africa and the Geopolitics of the Indian Ocean." (2011);

¹³ Taylor, Ian. *African politics: A very short introduction*. Oxford University Press, 2018, pp.11-24; Markakis, John. "The

Crisis of the State in the Horn of Africa." (2021), in Markakis, John, Günther Schlee, and John Young. *The nation state: A wrong model for the Horn of Africa*. Max-Planck-Gesellschaft zur Förderung der Wissenschaften, 2021.

¹⁴ Kefale, Asnake. "Federal restructuring in Ethiopia: renegotiating identity and borders along the Oromo-Somali ethnic frontiers." *Development and Change* 41, no. 4 (2010): 615-635. ; United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (1992) *The horn of africa: Multiple citizenship of the ethnic Somalis*, *Refworld*. Available at: <https://www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6a81120.html> (Accessed: 07 September 2023).

¹⁵ Mulugeta, Mercy Fekadu. "Small arms and conflict among East African pastoralists: the Karamoja (in) security complex."

competing and contradictory nation building projects which makes it prone to never ending wars.

Since the dawn of African states' independence, a diverse range of pre-colonial traditional authorities such as tribal confederations, clan systems, and payam settlements with paramount chiefs have not been incorporated into their western-style governments.¹⁶ These local structures and hierarchies have become transformed due to new elements like political parties and formal state structures (and modern armaments, discussed further below).¹⁷ The sub-region's contestation against and deviation from both traditional and contemporary state building is evidenced by the fact that African secessionist movements have only succeeded in the Horn.¹⁸ It is also the sub-region with the largest number of liberation movements (Ethiopia alone has one for almost every ethno-regional group¹⁹). Across the sub-region, the proximity of these groups to borders make them even more lethal.²⁰ While Djibouti, Somalia, and Sudan are examples of countries that attained independence using a colonial governmental model, the Ethiopia region retained its indigenous political system while incorporating several foreign aspects that helped give it a new form. Each country had to deal with its own problem in terms of peaceful union.²¹

So, what are the most important geographical, historical (pre-colonial, colonial, and post-independence), socio-

economic features of the Horn? How do the legacies of these features help or hinder the alignment of interests and values between local people, national leaders, and external actors?

3.2. *Marginalization and Vulnerability to Environmental Threats*

This factor is about understanding how marginalized and excluded communities perceive and experience their own context, and why that experience may leave them especially susceptible to threats and challenges that inevitably appear. The formation of a discontented and neglected population within a greater group often leads to instability and can easily escalate situations towards violence, for example the Afar ethnic group's resentment leading to civil war in Djibouti in the 1990s, the dividing of Sudan following years of bloodshed, and Oromia-Somali clashes in Ethiopia.²² The colonial and neo-colonial push towards a western definition of statehood and 'modernization' often saw those living in more metropolitan regions able to access amenities and services, leaving the rural population out of touch with the new path the state was taking.²³ The feelings of a marginalized group have historic precedence as a political or weaponizing tool.

There are numerous examples of this such as the relationship between the pastoralist community and governments in Kenya, Somalia, and Ethiopia. Ethiopia

Africa 87, no. 4 (2017): 739-757; *Borderland Policy Briefing Series - United Nations Development Programme* (2020) UNDP.

Available at:

<https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/migration/africa/Migration-and-Mobility-in-the-Karamoja-Cluster-FINAL-.pdf> (Accessed: 07 September 2023).

¹⁶ Lilius, Muddle Suzanne. "Multiple loyalty. Complex identities in the Horn of Africa." In *Proceedings of EASS/SSIA International Congress of Somali Studies. Variations on the theme of Somaliness*. Centre for Continuing Education, Åbo Akademi University, 2001; Joak, James Gatbel. "Working with farmers in upper Nile state, South Sudan for farmers to adopt multi-cropping practice in nakdiar and doleep payams." Master's thesis, Høgskolen i Oslo og Akershus, 2012.

¹⁷ Gebrewold, Belachew. "Society in the Horn of Africa." *Civil Militia: Africa's Intractable Security Menace?* (2017): 187.

¹⁸ Medani, Khalid Mustafa. "The Horn of Africa in the shadow of the cold war: understanding the partition of Sudan

from a regional perspective." *The Journal of North African Studies* 17, no. 2 (2012): 275-294.

¹⁹ Mesfin, Berouk. "Rebel Movements in Ethiopia." *Violent Non-State Actors in Africa: Terrorists, Rebels and Warlords* (2017): 163-193.

²⁰ Bereketeab, Redie. "Rethinking state-building in the Horn of Africa: Challenges of striking a balance between traditional and modern institutions." *African Studies* 70, no. 3 (2011): 376-392.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² Wasara, Samson S. "Conflict and state security in the Horn of Africa: militarization of civilian groups." *African Journal of Political Science* 7, no. 2 (2002): 39-60; Olika, Tafesse. "Conflicts and Conflict Resolution in the Horn of Africa: Toward the Study of Regional Peace and Security." *Ethiopian Journal of the Social Sciences and Humanities* 6, no. 1-2 (2008): 1-24.

²³ Woube, Mengistu. "Environmental Degradation and Hunger in the Horn of Africa: The Need of a Survival Strategy1." *Predicaments in the Horn of Africa* (2012): 435.

is in a particularly vulnerable position as it relates to state building, where socio-political and economic differences determined by the highland and lowland regions of the country have had long term impacts and contributed to the marginalization of non-Abyssinian communities, the rise in ethnic conflict, and power imbalances between the various ethnic groups.²⁴ It forced its institutional changes on its southern inhabitants while imposing the colonial oppression strategies that were employed against them.²⁵ Meanwhile Somalia was divided into five regions by imperial forces without any consideration to clan societal features or aspirations towards unification, and Djibouti was rife with ethnic rivalries and political allegiances. Similar difficulties under Ethiopian administrations also affected Eritrea.²⁶

Such marginalization thus makes large swathes of societies vulnerable to political shifts, external interventions, and inevitable socio-economic challenges such as drought (which are now being exacerbated by climate change impacts and poor governance structures).²⁷ There has been a level of stagnation regarding the Horn of Africa's state building practices due to the commonality of traditional practices and communities existing within national structures that neglect and ignore them, whilst that larger nation-state institution remains culturally alien and is limited in capacity even though it is the supposed to be the political framework for governing these multiethnic, multilingual nations.²⁸

How and why has marginalization and alienation of particular groups occurred? What practices or policies might encourage reconciliation and empowerment

between and across disparate groups, and within and across nations?

3.3. *Faith Based Security Threats and International Security Challenges*

This factor is about the mobilizing capacity of the strong religious beliefs that are typical in the region, and how they intersect and interact with global security challenges. This aspect has been especially pertinent in recent decades in relation to Islam and Jihadi groups, and the emergence of the US led 'Global War on Terror' (GWOT).

Governments in the Horn share a commonality in that they do not have a monopoly of violence in their respective areas. This gap in security has allowed for third party non state actors and individuals to ascend to prominence through violence and conflict.²⁹ Religious extremism in the Horn is not a new occurrence; and more recently the region has experienced violence at the hands of groups such as Al-Shabab in Somalia, and the Lord's Resistance Army and Allied Democratic Forces in Uganda.³⁰ The radicalist interpretation of various religious texts provides these groups with their justification for acts of terrorism, insurgency, and recruitment.³¹ The state's failure to deliver on civic duties relative to any social contract has allowed for a security vacuum that non-state actors and groups have taken advantage of. This is exercised through the use of organized and sometimes spontaneous acts of violence.

The interest of external powers also plays a part in the complexities of this region as countries such as the United States, China, Russia, and Gulf states compete

²⁴ Bereketab. "Rethinking state-building"; Hagmann, Tobias, and Alemmaya Mulugeta. "Pastoral conflicts and state-building in the Ethiopian lowlands." *Africa Spectrum* (2008): 19-37; Negatu, Workneh. *Economic interactions of pastoral lowland and highland systems and implications for sustainable livelihoods: A case study in Northeastern Ethiopia*. No. 7. African Books Collective, 2011.

²⁵ Clapham, Horn of Africa; Medhane, Tadesse. "Gambella: The Impact of Local Conflict on Regional Security." Pretoria: the Institute for Security Studies (2007), available at https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/123907/2007_05_01_Gambella.pdf

²⁶ Clapham, Horn of Africa

²⁷ Nassef, Magda, Simon Anderson, and Ced Hesse.

"Pastoralism and climate change: enabling adaptive capacity." ODI, London (2009).

²⁸ Bereketab "The Horn of Africa"

²⁹ Ibid

³⁰ Agbiboa, Daniel E. "Terrorism without Borders: Somalia's Al-Shabaab and the global jihad network." *Journal of Terrorism Research* (2014); Bøås, Morten. "Uganda in the regional war zone: meta-narratives, pasts and presents." *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 22, no. 3 (2004): 283-303.

³¹ Bereketab "The Horn of Africa"

militarily, economically, and politically for influence in the region.³² This competition is known to contribute towards instability in the region, as the US seeks to influence or subvert local political processes in Ethiopia and Somalia, for example; and governments in the region use the 'war on terror' to criminalize their opponents and strengthen the military-security axis at the expense of civil society or democracy.³³ The involvement of these external powers also creates an opportunity for governments and insurgence groups alike to strategize and align their interests which only further complicates the already intense intricacies of the region.³⁴

How and why are endogenous religious and/or cultural beliefs coopted by disparate violent groups? What interventions, from international or local actors, might offer alternative non-violent services and solutions to those provided by extremists?

3.4. *Legacies of War and Militarization*

This factor is about understanding the specific historical reality that decades of conflict has brought. This is in terms of the ease with which those with violent tendencies can arm themselves and resultant political

dynamics therein, as well as the psychological impact across societies of seemingly perpetual conflict.

Uncovering the roots of conflict requires unraveling the history of warfare and contention between differing groups. Horn countries have militaristic roots that help create conditions favorable to the relapse of violence in the region.³⁵ The introduction of the AK-47 significantly transformed traditional communities' social structures and power dynamics. This is particularly true for communities that are located near borders as evident with the Karamojong, for example, where the introduction of the AK-47 has significantly increased the rate of violence in the region.³⁶

Various communities and ethnic groups sense of identity is now intertwined with their military organization, as shown in Somalia and Darfur.³⁷ Due to the history of past conflicts as well as the violent nature of instability in the region, there is a militarized political culture that leans towards the use of force as a resolution tactic.³⁸ There are countless examples of armed rebel groups gaining control of states, such as the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) in Ethiopia, South Sudan People's Defence Forces (SPLA) in South Sudan, the National Resistance Army (NRA) in Uganda, and Eritrean People's Liberation Front in Eritrea.³⁹

³² Bates, Ted R., and Fletcher School of Law And Diplomacy Medford MA. *The Combined Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa: The Other Front on the Global War on Terror*. US Army War College, 2008; Lefebvre, Jeffrey A. "Choosing sides in the horn of Africa: Wikileaks, the Ethiopia imperative, and American responses to post-9/11 regional conflicts." *Diplomacy & Statecraft* 23, no. 4 (2012): 704-727; Kabandula, Abigail, and Timothy M. Shaw. "Rising powers and the horn of Africa: conflicting regionalisms." *Third World Quarterly* 39, no. 12 (2018): 2315-2333.

³³ Elliot, Ashley, and Georg-Sebastian Holzer. "The invention of 'terrorism' in Somalia: paradigms and policy in US foreign relations." *South African Journal of International Affairs* 16, no. 2 (2009): 215-244; Verhoeven, Harry, and Michael Woldemariam. "Who lost Ethiopia? The unmaking of an African anchor state and US foreign policy." *Contemporary Security Policy* 43, no. 4 (2022): 622-650; Kagwanja, Peter. "Counter-terrorism in the Horn of Africa: New security frontiers, old strategies." *African Security Review* 15, no. 3 (2006): 72-86; Tase, Peter. "Terrorism, War and Conflict, an analysis into the Horn of Africa." *Academicus-International Scientific Journal* (2012)

³⁴ Bereketeab, Redie. "The Horn of Africa Intra-State and Inter-State Conflicts and Security." *Nai.Diva*, Pluto Press, 12 Mar. 2012, www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:1429390/FULLTEXT03.pdf.

³⁵ Gebrewold, Belachew. "Civil Militias and Militarisation of Society in the Horn of Africa." In *Civil Militia*, pp. 187-212. Routledge, 2017.

³⁶ Agade, Kennedy Mkutu. "Complexities of livestock raiding in Karamoja." *Nomadic Peoples* 14, no. 2 (2010): 87-105.

³⁷ Christian, Patrick James. "Darfur – Ground Zero for Africa's Crises of Identity: A Psychohistoriography of Tribes in Conflict." *African Security* 6, no. 1 (2013): 1-37.

³⁸ Medhane, Tadesse. (2007, May). *Chapter 5: Overcoming challenges for security sector reform in the Horn of Africa*, ISS Africa. <https://issafrica.org/chapter-5-overcoming-challenges-for-security-sector-reform-in-the-horn-of-africa-medhane-tadesse>

³⁹ Fisher, Jonathan. *East Africa after liberation: conflict, security and the state since the 1980s*. Vol. 147. Cambridge University Press, 2020.

How has the legacy of war and militarization impacted the logistical, political, and psycho-social features of local and national actors, and what has been the role of the international community within these dynamics? How can policy interventions both understand and accept the implications of this reality, whilst proffering long term solutions to more cordial and non-violent politico-social relations?

3.5. *Changing Geopolitics and New Threats from the Gulf*

This factor is about major geopolitical shifts and their inevitable impact on the Horn. In contemporary times, as we potentially move to a more multipolar era, the newly emerging role and influence of Gulf countries is of particular interest, such as Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and the UAE. But in future geo-political eras different powers may (re)emerge who will also impact the Horn, just as the imperial, Cold War, post-9/11, and current multipolar eras have seen.

The Horn of Africa and the Gulf region of the Middle East have significant impact on each other due to proximity and interconnected interests. The Gulf states are blessed with energy resources and so they hold immense strategic importance in relation to security threats and conflicts in both regions.⁴⁰ The geopolitics of the Gulf region and the Horn continue to evolve, only adding to its complexity: Qatar mediated the territorial dispute between Djibouti and Eritrea; the UAE supplied drones that greatly assisted the central government during the Ethiopian 2020-22 Civil War with Tigray; and the Sunni-Shia divide between Saudi Arabia and Iran, as

well as the 2017 Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) crisis between Qatar and UAE, contributed to those powers open meddling and attempted peddling of influence in Somali's political landscape and elections.⁴¹

There is a resemblance to the Great Game of the 19th century with powerful actors competing for influence. There is an ongoing struggle between multilateralism and nationalism, liberalism and mercantilism at the global level, that is feeding into alliance building and strategic maneuvering within the Horn from the so-called 'Middle' or 'Great' powers.⁴² Preferences for strong men and a focus on deals involving military bases and ports compete against (relatively transparent) multilateral interventions and, at least ostensibly, liberal agendas of democracy being linked to development.⁴³ This ideological clash has led to the ascendancy of specific norms, principles, and values of Gulf states as it relates to foreign policy and international engagement. Former allies of the West, particularly the US, in the Gulf have become autonomous and began to work against Western democracy. They are reproducing themselves in the Horn based on their values and interests. Qatar's involvement in conflict mediation in the Horn towards Sudan, its presence in Somalia and the UAEs involvement in Sudan and Ethiopia saw attempts at facilitating and influencing political transitions, for example. Meanwhile the Horn has effectively diversified its partnerships by interacting with China, Turkey, and the US which all have critical implications for regional geopolitics and security.⁴⁴ Multiple foreign powers have also found themselves in competition for control of critical supply chains and access to strategic ports of Horn countries such as Djibouti, Somalia, and

⁴⁰ Lanfranchi, Guido. "Geopolitics Meets Local Politics in the Horn of Africa." *Clingendael Spectator*, Clingendael Institute, 1 Dec. 2021,

spectator.clingendael.org/en/publication/geopolitics-meets-local-politics-horn-africa/; Medhane, Tadesse. "Making Sense of the Deal", in Yihun, Belete Belachew. *Ethiopia and Eritrea Insights into the Peace Nexus* (2020) Tsehai Publishers, Washington DC, USA.

⁴¹ Mabon, Simon, and Robert Mason. "Gulf States and the Horn of Africa: Interests, influences and instability." *Gulf States and the Horn of Africa* (2022): 1-320; Cherkas, Bohdan, and Natalia Novytska. "The Interests of the Gulf Monarchies in the Horn of Africa." *Przegląd Politologiczny* 2 (2023): 67-84.

⁴² Donelli, Federico, and Brendon J. Cannon. "Power projection of Middle East states in the Horn of Africa: linking security burdens with capabilities." *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 34, no. 4 (2023): 759-779.

⁴³ Mabon and Mason. "Gulf States and the Horn of Africa"; Crawley, Heaven, and Brad K. Blitz. "Common agenda or Europe's agenda? International protection, human rights and migration from the Horn of Africa." *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 45, no. 12 (2019): 2258-2274.

⁴⁴ Resnick, Danielle. "Red Sea Rivalries: The Gulf, the Horn, and the New Geopolitics of the Red Sea." *Brookings*, Brookings Institution, 22 Apr. 2019, www.brookings.edu/events/red-sea-rivalries-the-gulf-the-horn-and-the-new-geopolitics-of-the-red-sea/.

Eritrea. This involvement is with the hopes of establishing a military, commercial and geopolitical presence in the region, the resultant implications of which on peace and security in the Horn are unknown.

How is global politics - and newly emerging middle, great and superpowers therein - influencing regional dynamics? How can local and national actors assert agency against and within those dynamics to form advantageous rather than subserviated positions?

4. CONCLUSION - ASKING THE RIGHT QUESTIONS IN THE HORN OF AFRICA

The Horn of Africa remains an intensely complex political, social and economic environment, with a violent history that has informed the socio-cultural landscape throughout the region to varying degrees. This reality will not be transformed through simplistic interventions or by those with short term agendas. Leadership scholars and practitioners, if genuinely seeking to offer transformative solutions to the myriad challenges encountered, need - at the very least - to *attempt* to understand that complexity in ways that previous actors have not. This commentary is presented here as something of a 'framework within a framework' in terms of better understanding the situational starting point of analysis of the Horn of Africa. It has sought to provide a series of factors with guiding working questions that can be asked by any scholar or practitioner prior to the subsequent questions around mutuality building, leadership emergence, and leadership effectiveness required for a leadership as process-based approach.

The preliminary analysis presented here hopefully sets a stage for deeper discussion and insight; and already throws up additional questions such as whether, given the ongoing new wars, are we bracing for a redrawing of nation-state borders in the Horn? Is marginalization of particular groups reaching a point where it is facilitating so-called 'state fracture', and by extension the emergence of militia states and decline or disdain of

state-led governance? And are we seeing the return of old civilizational conflicts across the Horn, Red Sea and Middle East?⁴⁵ Searching for both emergent and position-based leaders and avenues for transformative change within these dynamics is a compelling challenge for any leadership scholar.

The work does not pretend that the answers to these questions are easy or seek to answer them in great detail here. But it does contend that this is a useful conceptual and practical guide to those seeking to better understand the Horn of Africa in particular. We also believe that each factor, whilst here made specific with contemporary examples and nuances related to the Horn, are relevant to understanding other sub-regions in Africa and potentially beyond. Any given conflict situation requires an understanding of: the structural foundations for conflict; marginalization of particular groups; role of faith or cultural beliefs in relation to global security challenges; legacies of war vis-a-vis peace; and changing international relations. These must be accounted for within any given situation before any credible leadership analysis or intervention takes place. Within a leadership as process approach, answers to these questions would involve a conversation between leaders and followers. The ineffectiveness of most, if not all, external interventions in the Horn can at least partly be explained by this not having properly occurred previously.

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Studies 6, no. 2-3 (2014): 223-239; Árnason, Jóhann Páll. *Civilizations in dispute: Historical questions and theoretical traditions*. Vol. 8. Brill, 2003.

⁴⁵ Kabandula and Shaw. "Rising powers"; Balthasar, Dominik. "Somalia: unable to escape its past? Revisiting the roots of a fractured state and elusive nation." *Critical African*

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