



# Historical Sociology of State Formation in the Horn of Africa

Genesis, Trajectories, Processes,  
Routes and Consequences

**Redie Bereketeab**

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## PREFACE

This book is about the historical sociology of state formation in the Horn of Africa (HOA). It analyses and examines the genesis, trajectories, processes, routes and consequences of the complex evolution of state formation in the region. To that end, the book employs three analytical and explanatory models in explaining the complicated and arduous process of state formation in the HOA: proto-state, colonial and national liberation. These models heuristically and innovatively enable us to understand, interpret and analyse state formation in the HOA. While the proto-state model explicates an indigenous historical process of state formation in Ethiopia, the colonial model refers to an externally designed and imposed process of state formation. The national liberation model refers to a specific form of state formation conducted under a movement and ideology of—and within an environment of—national liberation. The distinct significance of these models is that collectively they have the power to a sufficient degree analyse state formation in the region. They are also unique in that they have never been employed as aggregate analytical and explicative instruments to address the predicament of state formation in the HOA.

The HOA is the region on the African continent that is most susceptible to conflict. The region suffers from convoluted and interwoven pathologies. These include intra-state and interstate conflicts; state crisis; underdevelopment; poverty; unemployment; mass migration; environmental degradation; drought and famine; external intervention and

geopolitical involvement; deficiency of democratic governance; authoritarianism; mismanagement of diversity; and multiplicity of identities. The root causes of the pathologies are multiple and complex, but the one that stands out is the nature and structure of the state.

The state is perceived to be the source as well as the remedy of the pathologies. While the contemporary nature and structure of the state undergird the pervasive conflicts, proper and complete state formation would remedy many of the conflicts of the region. Ultimately, state formation concerns societal construction, which in a broader sense stands at the centre of the problem the HOA faces. Societal construction is primarily conceptualised, in technical terms, as state formation and nation formation. At its most extreme, the status of the state and the nation in the HOA and in Africa in general are defined as weak, fragile, collapsed and absent. Conversely, this also demonstrates that the process of state formation in the HOA is still in a process of gestation and under construction.

The incompleteness of the process of state formation to a great extent explains the prevalence of the pathologies afflicting the HOA. It is also worth noting that the processes, routes and genesis of state formation in the HOA vary, justifying the employment of the three models. Generally speaking, three factors render the HOA distinctive: (1) throughout the postcolonial era, it has been the most conflict-afflicted region on the continent; (2) it has withstood the brunt of grave geopolitical interventions; and (3) it is perhaps the only region on the continent that has experienced the emergence of new states from existing states as an outcome of national liberation struggles.

The reason why the nature and structures of the state are perceived as problematic in the HOA is to be found in states' failure to tackle the representativeness of, inclusion, identification with, participation in and ownership of the state of and by all citizens. Often, the state lacks those qualities. These are essential qualities and requirements in multiethnic, multilingual, multifaith and multicultural societies. The current structure and nature of the state in the HOA are perceived as exclusionary, narrow in its representation, serving the interests of the few and dominated by certain groups and personalities.

Social science is still struggling to find a formula of state formation that commands universal validity and applicability. The general literature of state formation is fraught with discord and controversy, especially with reference to the universality of existing state models. The dominant

discourse accepts that the epistemic and ontological origin of the state is in Europe. The question, then, is whether the original Euro-centric societal setting is amenable for replication in non-European societal settings.

The narrow and orthodox conception of the genesis of the state has given rise to the widely held conception that Africa cannot imitate European state formation. Accordingly, political entities in Africa are often considered as an artificial imposition and a mismatch between the political organisation (state) and society. It is often proposed that the solution lies in the resolution of the mismatch, leading to recommendations that Africans should go back to their roots. Although there is no doubt that the mismatch explains state-society conflict, it is not clear where the source of this conflict comes from or if it is possible to simply extricate what has been grafted onto it over history.

This book acknowledges the double heritage that characterises post-colonial states in the HOA. The current states in the HOA contain in their body politic dialectically intertwined precolonial and colonial elements. Even the proto-state, through modernisation endeavours, has incorporated aspects of the European state model. The book contends that the political entities in the HOA are states, but perhaps of a different genre, not copycats of the European model.

At the root of the controversy revolving around the form of state in the HOA concerns definition. The definition of the state is broached from diverse theoretical and conceptual dimensions, the main ones being functionalist and institutionalist conceptions. The functionalist conception of the state derives from normatively identified functions a state is supposed to perform. Whether those normative functions prevail or not determines the existence of the state. The institutionalist conception, however, stems from how strong state institutions are, and whether they are capable of replacing and preventing personalised polity.

Two more dimensions of state formation are perceptions of the state as processual and evolutionary, and continuum; and the perception of historical sociology. The first conceptualises state formation as a long process that cuts across time (past, present and future), governed by a variety of rhythms, scopes and paces. The second perception understands state formation through the lens of the historical and sociological transformation of society. This transformation is dictated by and embedded in various stages, experiences, setbacks, tribulations and achievements that

cumulatively determine the state's formation, endowing it with its own specificity and characteristics.

In conclusion, the project of state formation is the essence of peace, security, stability and development in the HOA. As such, it needs to be taken seriously. It is also essential to take seriously the historical diversity, trajectories and specificities of the countries in which the model of state formation applicable to each one takes account of those factors. From this derives the rationale behind the three models, which reflect the historical specificities of the HOA.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

ANDM	Amhara National Democratic Movement
AU	African Union
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CPA	Comprehensive Peace Agreement
CS	Civil Society
ENLM	Eritrean National Liberation Movement
EPLF	Eritrean People's Liberation Front
EPRDF	Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front
EPRP	Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party
HDI	Human Development Index
HOA	Horn of Africa
IGAD	Intergovernmental Authority on Development
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IMF	International Monetary Fund
LM	Liberation Movement
MEISON	Mela Ethiopia Socialist Neqenaqe (All Ethiopian Socialist Movement)
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NCP	National Congress Party
NDF	Northeast Frontier District
NLM	National Liberation Movement
OAU	Organisation of African Unity
OPDO	Oromo People's Democratic Organisation
PDRE	People's Democratic Republic of Ethiopia
PMAC	Provisional Military Administrative Council
R2P	Responsibility to Protect

SEPDF	Southern Ethiopian People's Democratic Front
SNM	Somali National Movement
SNNPR	Southern Nations, Nationalities and People's Region
SPLM	Sudan People's Liberation Movement
SSLM	Southern Sudan Liberation Movement
TFG	Transitional Federal Government
TPLF	Tigray People's Liberation Front
UIC	Union of Islamic Courts
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly
USA	United State of America
WB	World Bank
WPE	Workers Party of Ethiopia
WTO	World Trade Organisation
WWII	World War II

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# Introduction: Challenges of State Formation

## INTRODUCTION

The central objective of the book is to examine the historical sociology of state formation in the Horn of Africa (HOA). It examines interrelated trajectories, processes, routes and consequences, and explains briefly the genesis, trajectory, contours, anatomies, routes and metamorphoses of state. Its focus is on the routes and models of state formation, rather than on countries themselves. The HOA countries, based on the routes and models of state formation, are clustered in three cases in this book. Accordingly, we identify:

1. **The proto-state formation model** Ethiopia represents. Ethiopia has a unique position in Africa. It has never been colonised and, therefore, is perceived to have followed an indigenous state formation process, often associated with the first stage of state formation. Since Ethiopia represents only itself this book treats it as a case in itself.
2. **The colonial model** and route of state formation represent the majority of African countries that are considered to be an outcome of colonial construction, including countries in the HOA. Since this is considered to be the standard, I have chosen not to take countries as individual cases; rather, I deal with the model itself, hence

the rationale. Of course, this does not mean there was no indigenous proto-state formation in the precolonial historical sociology of state formation; the Mahdiya state formation in Sudan's pre-British colonial history is an example.

3. **The national liberation state formation model** refers to those cases that went through a liberation struggle to achieve statehood and includes all the liberation movements in Africa. In the HOA, the cases of Eritrea, South Sudan and Somaliland are dealt with in a separate chapter.

These three models, collectively, would enable us to understand, interpret, analyse and explain the arduous and complicate process of state formation in the HOA. The three models as collective analytical and explanatory instruments would distinctly address the perennial challenges the HOA encounters. The rationale behind the adoption of the models for the HOA could be explained deriving from three factors that make the region distinct. These are: (i) the region's predisposition to high degree of conflicts and wars, (ii) the region's subjection to flagrant geopolitical interventions and (iii) the region's unique characteristics of production of new states from existing ones. Only the HOA, in the African Continent, exhibited successful secessionist statehood. This complex history, divergence of trajectory and suffering demand us to employ heuristic and innovative methodology, approach and mechanism. The three historical phenomena and trajectories dictating developments of societies of the HOA underpin the adoption of the three-model of state formation in the HOA.

*Historical Sociology of Nation Formation* differs from other works on the region in three aspects. Firstly, it employs three models as an aggregate analytical and explanatory methodological approach. Secondly, does not simply discard the impact of colonialism, rather it promotes the idea of striking balance between precolonial and colonial legacies of state formation. Thirdly, it highlights the evolutionary and continuum process of state formation connecting past, present and future. In other words, state formation is not a fixed onetime work. State formation in the HOA is still a work in progress.

The point of departure of this book is that the origin, nature and structure of the state are root causes of wars and conflicts that contribute to state crises. Alleviating the multiple and interconnected pathologies plaguing the region requires understanding, analysing and interpreting

the origin, nature and structure of the state. The message the book attempts to convey is that to understand the complex problems of the HOA, we need to understand the nature and structure of the state. To do that requires us to understand the history, genesis, processes, routes, models and variabilities of the historical sociology of state formation. To address the multifaceted problems of the region, we need to have a proper and adequate understanding of the processes, mechanisms, dynamics and consequences; the state is at the centre of it all.

Societies in the HOA have old civilisations and long histories of statehood (see El Mahdi 1965; Ullendorff 1973; Levine 2000; Marcus 2002; Fattovich 2010; Schmidt 2009). Indulging in this long history is, however, beyond the scope and objective of this book. Hence, it primarily pivots around modern state formation. Nevertheless, a more detailed treatment of the Ethiopian case is justified due to its proto-state formation nature.

For comparative purposes, a general overview of the literature on the origins, evolution, theories and models of states is also provided. Accordingly, processes, routes and historiographies are explicated without subscribing to linearity and a teleologically guided end. The book identifies three distinct but intermittently related models of state formation in the HOA. The work is an endeavour of explication and analysis of simultaneous delineation and fusion of three models of state formation. This assumption is predicated on the inference that in spite of the variance in routes, trajectories and processes of formation, the three types of state formation demonstrably illustrate identical performative functionality once states are at the top of their power. Irrespective of variance of modality, origin and historiography, they behave in the same way; the demonstrated historical variance does not imply functional variance. In addition, this book briefly looks at the political philosophy, historiography, historical sociology, political sociology and anthropology of state formation.

It also demonstrates overlaps with and transgressions beyond the boundaries of three forms of state formation, in which surgical delineation between them at times becomes difficult to achieve. This, however, does not mean historical variance is of no significance to the behaviour, performance and legitimacy of the state. With regard to the last, for instance, states extract legitimacy from a variety of sources. While the proto-state may extract legitimacy from indigenous history, tradition, culture, institutions and authorities, the colonial state principally extracts

it from colonially created territoriality and accompanying institutions; and the national liberation state, from revolutionary performance credentials.

This chapter concerns variables and realities that influence and constrain the processes and trajectories of state formation in the HOA. The chapter will, therefore, closely examine some of the factors that have direct implications for state formation in the region, which will be elaborated in subsequent chapters.

The HOA—consisting of Sudan, South Sudan, Somalia, Ethiopia, Eritrea and Djibouti—has inherited three models or forms of state formation, deriving from three sources. Proto-state formation pursued an indigenous route, process and structure. The actors involved in state formation are primarily indigenous, though they interact with external actors in forming and reforming the state. Proto-state formation in Ethiopia advanced through various stages. The first stage could be referred to as feudal absolutist state formation, more or less presumed to be similar to that of Western Europe. This was followed by self-proclaimed Marxist-Leninist Military socialist state formation. The Marxist-Leninist military socialist state was succeeded by the ethnic federalist state, which was introduced by ethnic nationalist insurgencies. Feudal state formation could also be discerned at a number of stages.

The second model refers to a type of state formation that was determined and constructed by colonialism, an outcome of the Berlin Conference of 1884–1885 where European powers, in their ‘scramble for Africa’, created political units in Africa that identified the respective powers’ possessions. The third model refers to states that came into existence as a result of a protracted national liberation struggle. It is important to note that a particular state might display features of all three models or some of them at various periods of its historical evolution and trajectory. Does this variation in the genealogy of state formation make a difference to the behaviour and exercise of the power of the state? This is a central question the book endeavours to answer.

The three models pose their own challenges and opportunities to the overall state formation enterprise, content, behaviours, structures, institutions, participation, inclusion/exclusion, power relations and exercise of power. They also pose a veritable challenge to social science discourse, theory and methodology. State-society relations are also defined by the type of state, particularly in its capacity for penetration, how it treats the social contract, etc. In this regard, perhaps, the national liberation state may display a greater penetrative capacity than the proto- or colonial state.



This penetrative capacity stems from the national liberation state's genesis as a rurally based movement, which has already extensively penetrated rural society, in particular, before ascending to state power. The entry point to the future national liberation state is through rural areas, where the state begins as a small guerrilla movement, eventually conquering the entire nation.

In the genealogy of state formation, the national liberation state is a phase—as such, a second phase. Both Eritrea and Somaliland are, for instance, colonial creations and colonial state formations. The decolonisation process, which is a logical culmination of sovereign statehood, was interrupted—in the case of Somaliland, by a voluntary union; in the case of Eritrea, by a forced federal marriage—necessitating a war of liberation as a means to achieve sovereign statehood. Their rebirth is attributed to their struggle for national liberation rather than decolonisation, which defines the peculiar nature they display. Ethiopia, however, went through various stages in its trajectory of state formation, which had institutional, structural, processual, epistemological and ontological implications; there were no clear boundaries or distinctions as regards to when and how the three typologies of state formation might merge or differentiate themselves.

The nature of the state in the HOA, its structure, institutional proclivities, mechanisms of exercising power and external relations dictate the conflicts and conflict structures devastating the HOA, and which dictate the nature, structure and performance of the state, alongside ubiquitous external interventions. The basic premise of the book is that the interplay of conflicts and external interventions over the long history of state formation and related pathologies plays a significant role in the structuration and formation of the state in the HOA. This chapter aims to provide a brief exposition of the factors that affect the process of state formation. It argues that the implications of the involvement of convoluted factors have resulted in deformed state formation. This deformity has in turn generated the multiple conflicts, environmental degradation, poverty, underdevelopment, migration and instability that define the HOA.

This chapter consists of seven sections: the following section (section “[Pathologies Hampering State Formation in the HOA](#)”) discusses the pathologies afflicting the HOA; section “[Interplay of the Pathologies](#)”, the interplay of the pathologies; section “[External Interventions](#)”, concerted external interventions; section “[Conceptual Framework](#)”, the

conceptual framework; and section “[Methodology](#)”, methodological issues. The final section (section “[Theme and Organisation of the Book](#)”) describes the theme and organisation of the book.

## PATHOLOGIES HAMPERING STATE FORMATION IN THE HOA

This section will briefly analyse the convoluted pathologies hampering the project of state formation in the HOA. Rampant pathologies define the region, which is often described as the most conflict-prone on the continent. The institutional and structural pathologies afflicting the HOA can, in general, be explained by identity domination, inequality, coercion, exclusion and marginalisation, poverty and underdevelopment, democratic deficiency, misgovernance, and skewed representation and participation. Institutional and structural situations are embedded in power relations between actors (e.g. individuals, political organisations, ethnic groups, interethnic relations, centre-periphery relations, regional environment, global relations, issues). In short, structures, actors, issues, relationships and environment define the pathologies.

In concrete and specific terms, the pathologies bedevilling the HOA region can be summarised in five clusters. The first four are of an internal nature, while the fifth is external: (1) conflict; (2) state crisis; (3) environmental degradation; (4) poverty and underdevelopment; and (5) external interventions (Bereketeab [2013](#); Woodward [2013](#); Schmidt [2013](#); Mengisteab [2014](#); Clapham [2017](#); Lewis and Harbeson [2016](#)). These pathologies have a veritable impact on the state formation process empirically, theoretically, structurally and institutionally; in particular, because state formation is conceptualised as institution formation and wars have the tendency to obliterate institutions and hamper their construction.

In relation to conflicts, they are understood as acts that involve physical violence which destroys lives and causes material destruction. In the present work, conflict and war are used interchangeably (Tom [2017](#): 40–41; Bereketeab [2013](#); Mengisteab [2014](#)). Conflicts are divided into intrastate and interstate. Interstate conflicts take place between internationally recognised or sovereign states. Traditionally, interstate conflicts have occurred infrequently in the HOA. The prominent interstate conflicts are the Ethiopia-Somalia wars of 1964 and 1977–1978; and the Ethiopia-Eritrea war of 1998–2000 (Bereketeab [2010](#); Woodward

2013). Compared to their relatively brief duration, however, the devastation wrought by interstate conflicts is immense. The Ethiopia-Eritrea war is thought to have cost the lives of more than 100,000 soldiers and material destruction estimated in billions of US dollars, and displaced millions of people (Negash and Tonvoll 2000).

Intrastate conflicts take place within a state's boundaries. They may assume a variety of names: civil wars, communal wars, ethnic conflicts, subnational conflicts, etc. (Mengisteab 2011; Clapham 1995). Intrastate conflicts are the most common type. In terms of frequency and duration, they greatly overshadow interstate wars; and because they last a long time, the material and human cost of intrastate wars is also colossal. Sudan has gone through consecutive wars since 1955. The longest war in southern Sudan concluded with the emergence of the Republic of South Sudan on 9 July 2011. Nevertheless, wars in the restive regions of Darfur, Blue Nile, South Kurdufan and sporadic conflict in the Kassala region have continued, putting Sudan in a perpetual state of war (Sorbo and Ahmed 2013; Johnson 2011; Harir and Tvedt 1994; Rolandsen 2005; Deng 2008). South Sudan has also been trapped in a bloody intrastate conflict since December 2013 (Chol 2021; Bereketeab 2017). The transition from liberation movement to civic government proved a formidable challenge for the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) (Bereketeab 2014c; Wambugu 2019).

Ethiopia was plunged into intrastate war with the commencement of the Eritrean struggle for independence in 1961, which lasted for 30 years. Ethiopia also suffered from ethnic nationalist wars in its Oromo, Somali and Tigray regions. Multiethnic movements fought the central government during the 1970s and 1980s, with the aim of changing state structures and retuning power relations (Markakis 2011; Tareke 2009; Bulcha 2002; Leencho 2004). The collapse of the military government in 1991 brought a coalition of ethnic nationalist movements to power, yet failed to end the chronic intrastate wars in the country (Gudina 2003; Tareke 2009; Lata 2004). Old and new ethnic nationalist conflicts, as well as multinational ones, remained active in Ethiopia, maintaining the old image of the country as war torn.

Various armed rebel groups challenged the government of Mohamed Siad Barre in Somalia in the 1980s. When the Barre regime was defeated in 1991, the Somali state also collapsed, leading to clan wars that continue in one form or other (Ismail 2010; Elmi 2010; Maruf and Joseph 2018).

Somaliland unilaterally declared its independence in 1991, while Puntland emerged as an autonomous entity in 1998 (Jhazbhay 2009). Today, there is relative peace and stability in the two breakaway regions (Walls 2014; Hoehne 2015). The rest of Somalia is still marching along a path of destruction and disintegration, with the mushrooming of autonomous regional clan states.

State crisis is caused by many factors. Evidently, the two most important factors causing state crisis are the origin of the state and concomitant rampant conflicts. These are two mutually reinforcing factors. The colonial origin of the state engendered structural deformation, primarily seen in the rural/urban cleavage (Mamdani 1996; Ekeh 1975). It alienated the postcolonial state from its rural societal foundations, the overwhelming majority of population located mainly in the rural areas, depriving the state, dominated by an urban minority, of popular domestic legitimacy. The absence of legitimacy is at the centre of the state crisis. Rampant conflicts also contribute to the deformation of the state. State institutions are either destroyed or cannot evolve. The state suffers from identity-related conflicts due to its inability to represent the identity groups within its ambit and ensure their equal participation in the public realm (Keller 2014; Mengisteab and Bereketeab 2012; Deng 2008). This concerns mismanagement of diversity. A state facing chronic wars is unable to produce functional and durable institutions that uphold peace, stability, development and democratic governance.

The third factor constituting the pathologies is environmental degradation. The HOA is suffering from concerted physical and atmospheric damage, which are the outcome of human and natural causes. Natural causes are associated with climatic changes that generate deforestation, desertification, soil erosion and degradation. Recently, the El Niño phenomenon has also exacerbated climate change-related problems. The second, human-related set of causes are primarily linked to the rampant wars, which cause enormous physical and climatic destruction. In addition to producing toxic emissions resulting from warfare, machines and weapons, military activities also destroy flora and fauna. Consequently, the HOA is frequently hit by recurrent droughts and famine. Shortages of drinking water, and erratic and undependable rainfall, mean that it is common for people to face difficulties in eking out their livelihoods (Bereketeab 2014a).

The fourth factor is underdevelopment and abysmal poverty. The majority of the peoples of the HOA live below the minimum subsistence level. Countries in the HOA consistently rank near the bottom of the Human Development Index (Salih 2018). The pervasive and abysmal poverty the region suffers from has multiple causes, the main ones being war, political instability, mismanagement of diversity, mismanagement of resources, bad governance and external intervention (Mengisteab 2011; Bereketab 2013; Woodward 2013). Poverty is one of the strongest drivers that pushes people to resort to violence. The old adage that the poor are readily involved in conflict because they have nothing to lose seems easily proved in the HOA.

The fifth factor is external interventions. The composite variables of external interventions include colonialism, the Cold War, the so-called global war on terror, the fight against piracy and the scramble for resources (Woodward 2006, 2003; Schmidt 2013; Brosig 2015; Yordanov 2016). The demise of colonialism was succeeded by the Cold War and neocolonialism. The consequences of superpower blundering were conspicuous in the HOA. The United States (US) and the Soviet Union (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) transformed the HOA into an arena for proxy wars, the result being chronic intra- and interstate conflicts (Yordanov 2016; Bereketab 2013; Markakis et al. 2021).

The end of Cold War provided a temporary respite to the region when the superpowers retreated. It was not long, however, before the US returned to the region on the grounds that it was to hunt for alleged terrorists who were suspected of having found safe haven in Somalia. Terrorist attacks on the US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania in 1998, and in the US itself on 11 September 2001, heralded the global war on terror (Samatar 2013; Möller 2013). This constituted the third stage of international intervention in the HOA (Yordanov 2016; Sun and Zoubir 2016). The fight against piracy off the coast of Somalia led virtually all the world's naval forces to converge on the region, remilitarising the HOA (Bereketab 2014b; Melvin 2019). The latest international intervention in the HOA assumed the form of what has come to be known as the scramble for resources. Minerals, oil and arable land are highly coveted not only in the West, but also in the East (mainly China, but also India and the newly rising countries) and Middle Eastern countries (particularly for arable land) (Eskeziaw 2020: 14; Hules and Singh 2017), with the potential for military confrontation. This development

has adversely affected the state formation process just as its predecessors—colonialism, neo-colonialism and Cold War interventions—did, resulting in the continued deformity of the state.

These features in turn generate state crises that engender various forms of conflicts. State crises and conflicts render the HOA region the unstable, poverty-ridden, prone to extremism and radicalism, underdeveloped and vulnerable to external interventions. This bears testimony to a vicious circle of mutually reinforcing factors that adversely affect the process of state formation.

### INTERPLAY OF THE PATHOLOGIES

The cumulative effects of the interplay of the pathologies on state formation are conspicuous. Individually, they may not have a great impact, but cumulatively they are devastating. Conflicts are defined as either intrastate or interstate. The interplay between the two forms is primarily expressed in terms of how easily an intrastate conflict could spill over into interstate conflict; or an interstate conflict could induce intrastate conflict. In other words, domestic conflicts have the tendency to drag in neighbouring, leading to interstate conflict (Touval 2015: 416–417; Bereketeab 2013).

The inherent dialectical reciprocity of the interplay of both types of conflict makes it difficult to detect, diagnose and resolve potential flash-points of conflicts. This is exacerbated in a situation where identity groups are spread across international political boundaries. The politics of identity in multiethnic societies that are geographically contiguous may be easily deflect in abutting regions, where shared common identities bestride borders. But the identity groups share not only identities, but also problems that can drag states into interstate conflicts (Mengisteab 2014; Keller 2014; Deng 2008). The history of the HOA has shown time and again how this overlap and interplay have devastated the region.

In terms of the interplay between conflict and state crisis, the two clearly and decisively affect one another. Conflicts impact on the nature of the state and state formation process. A conflict-ridden state is certainly unable to maintain routine functions, including delivering basic services. A state that is not capable of delivering basic services is devoid of any form of legitimacy. The nature of the state may thus generate disaffection, grievances and conflicts. Unambiguously, a society riven by chronic conflicts faces unsurmountable difficulties in building state institutions that determine the viability and functionality of the state. The state as

an institutional artefact is very much contingent upon the construction of its constitutive institutions (Poggi 1978; Kamrava 2000). A state suffering from festering conflicts is deformed by them, and this deformity in turn becomes a source of chronic conflicts (Mengisteab 2014; Christensen and Laitin 2019).

Environmental degradation may in part be caused by war, just as it may also be the cause of it. Wars that have raged for decades have contributed to environmental degradation in the HOA; deforestation, desertification and soil erosion are some of the conspicuous outcomes. These are contributing factors to resource shortages afflicting the livelihoods of communities with different modes of life. Clashes between groups generate resource-based conflict, which by extension affects state functions. The interplay between conflicts and environmental degradation may also ultimately lead to structural and cultural transformation (Bereketeab 2014a).

Environmental degradation that generates scarcity of resources leads to conflicts, particularly when resources are not properly managed. Resource-based conflicts are at their most acute when they play out between nomadic pastoralists and sedentary farmers (Ahmed 2001; Ahmed and Manger 2006; Mohamed 2009), pitching highlanders against lowlanders, as well as different ethnolinguistic groups against one another. Environmental degradation becomes the cause of poverty and underdevelopment and vice-versa. Poverty and underdevelopment are also involved in producing conflicts and state crises.

## EXTERNAL INTERVENTIONS

The last dimension in the cluster relates to externality. External interventions either cause or aggravate conflict, state crisis, environmental degradation, and poverty and underdevelopment. In turn, state crisis, fragility and collapse make good excuses for external intervention. The HOA is probably the region in Africa that has been most affected by external interventions, as described above. Big power and military interventions have negative implications for the state formation process, particularly state-society relations, which define the functionality of state formation.

State formation, by its very nature, is domestic. In addition, it is political, demanding intricate compromises, dialogue, negotiation, bargaining and public discussion among stakeholders. It is imperative that state

formation depends on and reflects societal reality through the art of creating social equilibrium, consensus and balance. External interventions upset the equilibrium and balance, leading to dissonance, competition, mistrust, cleavages and disorder, which disrupt the consensus-oriented culture of the HOA societies.

The historical genealogy of external intervention in the regions can be traced as far back as the Middle Ages, the inception of which relates to a confrontation over trade routes through the Red Sea and religious influence, between the Ottoman Empire, on the side of Muslims, and the Portuguese in support of Christian Abyssinia in the fifteenth century (Levine 2000). For the purposes of this book, modern external intervention in the HOA began in conjunction with the genesis of colonialism. The ideational foundation of colonialism relates to what is commonly known as the scramble for Africa, when European leaders gathered at a conference in Berlin, Germany, in 1884–1885 and resolved to partition Africa among themselves (Brosig 2015; Davidson 1992; Smith 1983). The rationale behind European imperial penetration in Africa is invariably depicted as primarily to search for raw materials, markets for their finished goods and cheap labour (Schmidt 2018: 10–11; Smith 1983: 26–27). It also concerned geostrategically driven rivalry (Yordanov 2016). This classical physical colonialism was later replaced by indirect, metaphysical colonialism, commonly known as neocolonialism (Nkrumah 1970).

The British colonised Sudan and northern Somalia (Ryle et al. 2011; Walls 2014), while Italy colonised Eritrea and southern Somalia (Lewis 2002; Mesghenna 1988; Negash 1987; Bereketeab 2007); and France, Djibouti (Abdallah 2012). Ethiopia escaped European colonisation, though it was briefly occupied by Italy from 1936 to 1941 during the World War II (Rubenson 1978; Erlich 1996). Nonetheless, it was involved in its own expansionism and colonisation of peoples and territories to the south (Zewde 2001; Tareke 1996; Hassen 1990; Markakis 1974; Clapham 2002). This expansion sowed the seeds of future conflict, the consequences of which are still devastating the country. Ethiopia's contemporary problems can to some extent be explained by its expansion in the nineteenth century.

The Somalis were most affected by the combined European colonial intervention and partition, and Ethiopian expansion. They were divided and incorporated into five states (Markakis et al. 2021). This division produced among Somalis the dream of pan-Somalism. Since independence and the formation of the Republic of Somalia, Somalis have



pursued a policy of realising this dream and the ambition of uniting all ethnic Somalis under the umbrella of one state at any cost. Their desire for unity was symbolically represented by the five-pointed star flag. This irredentist ambition pitched the Somalis against their neighbours. Consequently, it has constituted one of the contributing factors to the pathologies afflicting the region (Lewis 2002).

This indicates that some of the pathologies afflicting the HOA originated in colonial intervention and territorial expansion. Structures, institutions and political economy introduced as a result engendered cleavages based primarily on a rural/urban binary. Small urban-based modern elites came to dominate postcolonial societies, with all the concomitant social, political, economic and cultural inequalities, tensions and conflicts. The overwhelmingly rural majorities were excluded and marginalised, as an institutional cleavage emerged whereby urban-based institutions gained primacy over rurally based ones. This rural/urban dichotomy constitutes a perennial source of conflicts (Ekeh 1975; Mamdani 1996; Herbst 2000; Englebert 2005). Postcolonial leaders never made a serious attempt to remedy the state deformation caused by its colonial origins.

Colonialism was replaced by another form of intervention, a fatal combination of the overlap between neocolonialism and the Cold War. Decolonisation saw the physical withdrawal of colonial masters, while their economic, political, cultural and diplomatic domination—and dependence on them—continued. This coincided with lethal geostrategic and ideological rivalry that broke out between the US and the Soviet Union. According to Nkrumah (1970: ix):

The essence of neo-colonialism is that the State which is subject to it is, in theory, independent and has all the outward trapping of international sovereignty. In reality its economic system and thus its political policy is directed from outside.

The political economy of the postcolonial state was framed in a way that allowed the erstwhile masters to perpetuate their dominance. Gradually, with the exception of France, the colonial masters in the HOA retreated from their ex-colonies and were replaced by the emerging global superpowers. The Cold War that followed the end of the World War II converted the HOA into a theatre of proxy war (Brosig 2015; Yordanov 2016). In pursuit of ideological and geostrategic world domination, the US and the Soviet Union supplied sophisticated modern weapons to their