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### 3. Leadership and conflict: Examining governance as the core challenge in East and Horn of Africa

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#### **Abstract**

Historically, African countries, especially the Horn of Africa region, have been affected by complex conflicts rooted in the post-colonial state formation era. The region's key conflict threat is government transition, which has historically been accompanied by insecurity, political instability, and chaos. Conflicts and political instability have been associated with drought, youth unemployment, food security, resource scarcity, and displacement. The study utilizes a case study approach (qualitative case study), to examine governance structures and conflict in Sudan, South Sudan, Somalia, and Ethiopia, further enhanced by discussing the role of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) in resolving conflicts in the region. This study assesses the relationship between conflict and governance within IGAD member states. Unjust and ineffective governance structures compound several challenges that protract violence, including perpetuating distrust, natural resource challenges, alienating youth, and exacerbating inequalities between various social groups. Grounded on the relative deprivation theory and the good governance framework, the study elucidates that intrastate conflict-related studies link the roots of social conflicts with relative deprivation. Relative deprivation is associated with the high level of social, economic, and health disparities affecting the region. The findings indicate that in all the case studies examined, governance inadequacies - such as corruption, political marginalization, ethnic politicization, and insufficient institutional capacity are the key drivers of conflict emergence and persistence. Therefore, this article argues that the democratic institutions of a country are the most essential factor in reducing deprivation-motivated conflicts. The good governance theory illustrates the need for participation, transparency, application of the rule of law, and accountability as the core pillars

of effective governance. Finally, the study concludes that the solution to sustainable peace in the Horn of Africa lies in extensive governance reforms that give priority to political inclusivity, deepening of democratic institutions and the creation of improved systems of regional cooperation.

**Keywords:** Power, conflict resolution, Horn of Africa, good governance

## 1. Introduction

The 2019 African governance report highlights that Most African nations are poorly governed, thereby deteriorating development and security challenges, which narrows down to the problems faced in the Horn of Africa.<sup>1</sup> The Horn of Africa is a conflict-prone region with a history of high rates of civil wars and political instability, which has, in turn, resulted in a wide range of costs, including loss of lives, risk for future conflicts, loss of physical capital, social disorder, and negative impact on the economy, increasing rates of poverty in affected regions. In developing countries, internal security is one of the key challenges due to recurring intrastate conflict. Just like many other African countries, the region's key conflict threat is government transition, which is historically accompanied by a sense of insecurity, political instability, and chaos from various groups mainly because politics is still played along ethnic and regional lines. Over time, the violence witnessed in the Horn of Africa exceeds the instability experienced in any other African region.<sup>2</sup> While there are rich scholarly material focusing on the conflict in this region, most of the studies are not systematically focused on the root causes of the conflicts.

To comprehend leadership as it applies to governance and conflict, it is important to have a conceptualized definition of what leadership is and the different forms of leadership. Leadership has been described as a process where a calculated influence is exerted on people with the aim of guiding,

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<sup>1</sup> African Governance Report (2019). Agendas 2063 & 2030: Is Africa on the Track? London: MO Ibrahim Foundation.

<https://mo.ibrahim.foundation/sites/default/files/2019-10/African%20Governance%20Report%202019.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Zona, Kakenya. "Power, bad governance and persistent conflicts in the horn of Africa: a case study of south Sudan." (2020).

coordinating, and empowering actions and relationships within groups or organizations. <sup>3</sup>This is a process-based definition of leadership that sees it as a dynamic process in which leaders and their followers engage. Within the African political framework, leadership has both traditional and modern cores, where traditional leaders represent guardians of cultural values, council of governance, and community development, while modern leaders organize government, formulating policies, and offer direction to the national development. <sup>4</sup>These differences between the two forms of leadership are critical in explaining the governance issue in the Horn of Africa where both traditional and modern leadership systems simultaneously co-exist and compete for legitimacy and power.

The multiplicity of leadership styles further explains the challenge of governance in areas of conflicts. Contemporary studies have provided several typologies of leadership, such as transformational leadership that motivates followers based on vision and moral purpose; transactional leadership that works through systems of rewards and exchange relationships; and secure base leadership that uses the attachment theory to focus on how leaders provide psychological security and support to subordinates.<sup>5</sup> In ethnically diverse African settings like Kenya and Nigeria, the theory of inclusive leadership implies that sustainable political leadership that believes in mobilizing citizens, building national unity and conducting good governance can mitigate the adverse effects of ethnicity in the polity.<sup>6</sup> However, there are also the destructive leadership patterns that occur in the Horn of Africa such as autocratic styles with centralized decision-making and limited participation that can be traced to institutional weakness and governance failures throughout the continent.

In this leadership framework, governance becomes a key process through which leadership intentions are converted into societal outcomes. Poor or good governance refers to the quality of the concepts of governance when applied to deal with the challenges facing societies.<sup>7</sup> The aspect of

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<sup>3</sup> Badura, Katie L., Benjamin M. Galvin, and Min Young Lee. "Leadership emergence: An integrative review." *Journal of Applied Psychology* 107, no. 11 (2022): 2069.

<sup>4</sup> Alidu, Seidu. "Leadership, governance and public policy in Africa." *Public policy and research in Africa* (2023): 213.

<sup>5</sup> Navas-Jiménez, María C., Ana Laguía, Patricia Recio, Carlos García-Guiu, Alberto Pastor, Sergio Edú-Valsania, Fernando Molero, Mario Mikulincer, and Juan A. Moriano. "Secure Base Leadership in military training: enhancing organizational identification and resilience through work engagement." *Frontiers in Psychology* 15 (2024): 1401574.

<sup>6</sup> Kalu, Kenneth, and Ernest Tooichi Aniche. "Political leadership, ethnicity and government effectiveness in Africa: comparative evidence from Kenya and Nigeria." *SN Social Sciences* 4, no. 4 (2024): 84.

<sup>7</sup> Holeni, Rifumuni Bridget. "Evaluating the impact of poor-quality governance in Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality in the Free State Province." (2024).

governance is instrumental because it is the medium through which the non-state actors determine whether there is a connection between the functioning of the country and the larger society. This long-term relationship between citizens and government is in the form of a legitimacy and this means that an efficient government must meet the legitimacy demands of its citizens. Citizens must be involved in the affairs of the country with the aim of accountability, transparency and strategic focus on the challenges of the society, and equity in distributing the resources. Governance is also an avenue where the government prioritizes the rights of the vulnerable, marginalized, and disadvantaged groups. When the governance is weak, a relative deprivation concept is born and this concept is a source of instability and violence.

Poor governance or effective governance describes the quality of governance concepts in the context of addressing societal challenges. Governance is an instrumental aspect since it is the avenue through which non-state actors establish if there is a link between the country's operations and the broader society. This long-term link between citizens and government lies in legitimacy, implying that an effective government has to comply with the legitimacy demands from its population.<sup>8</sup> The involvement of citizens in the country's affairs is essential for the purpose of accountability, transparency and strategic focus on societal challenges, and equity in resource distribution. Also, governance provides an avenue through which the government gives priority to the rights of vulnerable, marginalized, and disadvantaged groups. In the lack of effective governance, there emerges a concept of relative deprivation, which is a catalyst of instability and violence.

Poor governance is defined as a condition characterized by a lack of effectiveness in eradicating various societal challenges, including corruption, infrastructural development, terrorism, and insurgency, among others. This can be explained as a poor relationship between segments of society and the government in decision-making, building aggression among parties. Therefore, poor governance has extreme damage to the correlative function of a nation, mainly in improving human capital development, growing wealth to reduce poverty rates, and promoting economic growth. Based on this analysis, Dan-Woniowei (2020) suggests that governance and political systems are supposed to be held accountable for the progress or downfall of a state or society.

In the context of the Horn of Africa, Social, political, and economic instability are the major challenges affecting the region. Just like in other African countries, peace challenges emerge from ethnic

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<sup>8</sup> Dan-Woniowei, F. D. (2020). The Nexus between Poor and Bad Governance, and Sub-National Conflicts in Africa. *Open Journal of Political Science*, 10(04), 697.

tension, the nature of political parties, inequalities, religious tension, and external interference, among others.<sup>9</sup> However, most countries in the Horn of Africa lead in political stability and conflicts, showing the severity of the problem in the region. While there are a number of fueling factors to the engagement of violent extremist groups, often, there are links to governance-related catalysts such as corruption, exclusion, and discrimination.

Havard highlights that states that have had conflicts before have a high risk of recurrence of such conflicts.<sup>10</sup> However, this risk can be modified through governance; in countries with good and effective governance, risk of renewal of a conflict significantly and rapidly drops after the conflict ends. On the other hand, in countries with poor governance, there is a high risk of renewal of the conflict even long after it ends. Therefore, good governance is not only instrumental in preventing the onset of a conflict, but also prevention of conflict renewal.

Since the 1960s, the Horn of Africa have been faced with both intra and inter-state conflicts rooted in post-colonial state formations. These conflicts have been complex, interrelated, and some severe as the Horn of Africa remains one of the most insecure and conflict-ridden regions globally.<sup>11</sup> Majority of the conflicts within the Horn of Africa region are not new but recurring thereby making it crucial to understand key catalysts of conflict recurrence.<sup>12</sup> Unjust and ineffective governance structures compound several challenges that perpetrate violence, including perpetuating distrust, natural resource challenges, alienating youth, and exacerbating inequalities between various social groups. This implies that governance challenges like illegitimate and unfair institutions, lack of political inclusiveness, and corruption are key factors igniting unrest among social groups, resulting in recurring conflicts. It is, therefore, necessary to tackle these governance-related root causes of political instability and conflict to effectively ignite and sustain lasting peace.

Conflicts within the Horn of Africa can be linked to various dimensions, including social, political, and economic dimensions; in country and regional governance has played a key role in the development

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<sup>9</sup> Hailu Demeke, Yemareshet. "Youth unemployment and political instability: Evidence from IGAD member countries." *Cogent Economics & Finance* 10, no. 1 (2022): 2079211.

<sup>10</sup> Hegre, Håvard, and Håvard Mokleiv Nygård. "Governance and conflict relapse." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 59, no. 6 (2015): 984-1016.

<sup>11</sup> Apuuli, Kasaija Phillip. "Regional Organizations and Conflict Management in Africa: The Case of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) in the Horn of Africa Region." In *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of International Studies*. 2023.

<sup>12</sup> Hegre, Håvard, and Håvard Mokleiv Nygård. "Governance and conflict relapse." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 59, no. 6 (2015): 984-1016.

and acceleration of these conflicts.<sup>13</sup> This interrelation, however, can be best explained through governance interactions with inequalities, youth unemployment, and corruption.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2-1 Introduction to the Literature

The convergence between governance and conflict has raked in significant scholarly regard in the last thirty years as academicians and policy makers attempt to comprehend the continued violence in developing countries. The Horn of Africa is a perfect example, worth considering this nexus, due to the long-standing conflicts and the administrative issues since it has had since independence. This literature review is a synthesis of existing research on the relationship between governance and conflicts, analysing the theoretical frameworks, empirical evidence, and application of this relationship to the East and Horn of Africa context. The review is structured around themes, starting with the general theoretical viewpoints and then the regional particulars before outlining gaps that this study fills.

### 2-2 Theoretical Foundations: Governance, Conflict, and the State: Good Governance Theory and Its Evolution

Good governance became a widely cited concept in development discourse in the 1990s, especially through World Bank initiatives that have identified a relationship between governance quality and development outcomes.<sup>14</sup> Kaufmann, Kraay and Mastruzzi helped create measurable indicators of good governance; such as voice and accountability, political stability, government effectiveness, quality of regulations, rule of law and control of corruption.<sup>15</sup> The dimensions have established themselves as a benchmark in the evaluation of the quality of governance among states. Addink builds on this model by highlighting participation, transparency, rule of law, and accountability as fundamental elements of good governance and that these elements are not only vital to development, but also to political legitimacy

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<sup>13</sup> Farah Hersi, Mohamed, and Adeoye O. Akinola. "IGAD and Regional Conflicts." In *IGAD and Multilateral Security in the Horn of Africa: Through the Lens of the Somali Conflict*, pp. 113-142. Cham: Springer Nature Switzerland, 2024.

<sup>14</sup> Appiah, Michael, Stephen Taiwo Onifade, and Bright Akwasi Gyamfi. "Analysing governance-led infrastructural development nexus in sub-Saharan Africa: Does the moderating role of institutional quality matter?" *Growth and Change* 55, no. 1 (2024): e12709.

<sup>15</sup> Kaufmann, Daniel, and Aart Kraay. "The worldwide governance indicators: Methodology and 2024 update." *Available at SSRN 5154675* (2024).

and social cohesion.<sup>16</sup>

Rothstein and Teorell aver that the quality of government institutions is the principal factor that determines willingness of citizens to obey the power of the state and collaborate with other citizens.<sup>17</sup> Their study established that fair institutions, those that administer and enforce laws and policies without any kind of bias, yield public trust and minimize the prospects of conflict. This theoretical input is applicable in delineating how lack of governance in the Horn of Africa is the cause of violence cycles. Khalaf, however warns of good governance turning into an empty checklist, and believes in good enough governance which focuses on improvements tailored to the institution setting. This argument is a core issue in the interpretation of the governance reform agenda in fragile states.<sup>18</sup>

## 2-3 Relative Deprivation Theory and Conflict

The relative deprivation theory, first developed by Stouffer and others in their research on American soldiers, was established on the assumption that people do not weigh their position against an absolute criterion of evaluation but against reference groups.<sup>19</sup> The application of this theory by Gurr to political violence was monumental because it discovered that collective violence arises when groups of people believe they are not receiving their value expectations and capabilities; what he refers to as relative deprivation. This paradigm has been especially effective in unravelling ethnic wars and uprisings in the developing nations.

Relative deprivation theory has been refined recently to distinguish between horizontal inequalities (between groups) and vertical inequalities (between individuals). The tendency to horizontal inequalities as proposed by Stewart illustrates that the systematic variation among culturally defined groups in political, economic, and social aspects increases the risk of conflict greatly.<sup>20</sup> This theoretical development is applicable to the Horn of Africa, where political competition and allocation of resources is based on ethnic, clan, and religious identity structure. Stewart's illustration is consistent with

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<sup>16</sup> Madu, Chidimma Irene. "Impact of Good Governance in EU Law." (2025).

<sup>17</sup> Suzuki, Kohei, and Mehmet Akif Demircioglu. "Is impartiality enough? Government impartiality and citizens' perceptions of public service quality." *Governance* 34, no. 3 (2021): 727-764.

<sup>18</sup> Khalaf, Rana. "Local Governance at the Intersection of Peace and State Formation in Syria: The Case of Al-Raqqa's Revolution-Induced Areas of Limited Statehood (2011-2022)." PhD diss., The University of Manchester (United Kingdom), 2024.

<sup>19</sup> Lilly, Kieren James. "The Haves and the Have-nots: Antecedents, Consequences, and Development of Perceived Relative Deprivation Over Time." PhD diss., ResearchSpace@ Auckland, 2024.

<sup>20</sup> Hillesund, Solveig, and Gudrun Østby. "Horizontal inequalities, political violence, and nonviolent conflict mobilization: A review of the literature." *Journal of Economic Surveys* 37, no. 5 (2023): 1589-1635.

Cederman, Weidmann, and Gleditsch's assertion that politically marginalized ethnicity is far more prone to initiating armed conflict, particularly when political marginalization is combined with economic grievances.<sup>21</sup>

Mios Downik and Nir advance the theory by exploring the moderating effects of the quality of governance in the relationship between relative deprivation and conflict by arguing that inclusive institutions can soften the impact of grievances despite the existence of economic inequalities.<sup>22</sup> This observation indicates that governance reforms can be more effective in the short term in mitigating the risk of conflict than redistribution of the economy.

## 2-4 State Fragility and Conflict Recurrence

Rotberg identifies weak, failing, and failed states based on their inability to deliver security, political goodwill and economic infrastructure.<sup>23</sup> The absence of monopoly on legitimate use of force and failure to provide basic services, which is a symptom of failed states, results to vacuity, which armed groups take advantage of. The protracted statelessness of Somalia, since 1991, is an example of such a dynamic.

A quantitative study of 134 civil wars by Hegre and Nygard has shown that the quality of governance is a key factor in determining the risk of conflict recurrence.<sup>24</sup> Well-governed countries record high rates of risk reduction of conflict upon settling whereas poorly-governed countries record high rates of risk, even, decades after the conflicts have been settled. Their findings indicate that an estimated 40 percent of civil wars reignite within a decade in poorly governed states, whereas less than 10 percent do so in well-governed states. This reality highlights the importance of governance enhancement as a key to sustainable peacebuilding, rather than conflict prevention.

In his study on the recurrence of civil war, Gould underlines credible commitment issues in weak or biased state institutions.<sup>25</sup> Ex-combatants who lay down arms are in existential danger when they cannot rely on the government to uphold peace accords or guard their interests. This is the case in South

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<sup>21</sup> Cederman, Lars-Erik, Yannick I. Pengl, Dennis Atzenhofer, and Luc Girardin. "Nationality Questions and War: How Ethnic Configurations Affect Conflict Within and Between States." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* (2025): 00220027241312624.

<sup>22</sup> Olaoye, Olumide Olusegun, Olatunde Julius Omokanmi, and Mosab I. Tabash. "Is income inequality-conflicts nexus moderated by the quality of governance? Insight from sub-Saharan Africa." *International Journal of Social Economics* 52, no. 9 (2025): 1288-1304.

<sup>23</sup> Rotberg, Robert I., ed. *When states fail: Causes and consequences*. Princeton University Press, 2024.

<sup>24</sup> Braithwaite, Jessica Maves. "Civil conflict." In *Handbook of International Relations*, pp. 289-309. Edward Elgar Publishing, 2025.

<sup>25</sup> Gould, Philip. *War Power: Literature and the State in the Civil War North*. Oxford University Press, 2024.



Sudan where recurrent peace agreement collapse is an indicative of a lack of governance and trust.

### 3. Regional Perspectives: Conflict Dynamics in the Horn of Africa

#### 3-1 Post-Colonial State Formation and Conflict

The modern conflicts in Horn of Africa strongly lie in their colonial background and state-building processes since independence. In their analysis of the region, Sanches et al., highlight the process of formation of states in colonial boundaries that included heterogeneous ethnic communities that had little in common politically.<sup>26</sup> These boundaries were arbitrary and together with centralized forms of governance by the colonial authorities, they unsettled traditional systems of authority leading to a lifetime of tension.

Steytler contends that even the nation-state model is inherently inappropriate to the Horn of Africa, where pastoral and agro-pastoral societies have traditionally structured themselves around kinship and clan, as opposed to territorial sovereignty.<sup>27</sup> He argues that efforts to force European models of states have created persistent opposition and war. This view questions the traditional models of peacebuilding that presuppose state-centered solutions.

Boone's comparative analysis of African state formation identifies patterns of "ethno-regional brokerage politics" where political elites mobilize ethnic constituencies to compete for state resources.<sup>28</sup> This politicization of ethnicity transforms cultural differences into sources of violent competition, particularly during electoral periods or government transitions. The pattern is evident across Ethiopia, Kenya, and Sudan, where ethnic arithmetic shapes coalition-building and patronage distribution.

### 4. Governance Deficits and Specific Conflict Drivers

#### 4-1 Corruption and State Capture

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<sup>26</sup> Sanches, Edalina Rodrigues, Nic Cheeseman, Wouter Veenendaal, and Jack Corbett. "African exceptions: democratic development in small island states." *Journal of International Relations and Development* 25, no. 1 (2022): 210-234.

<sup>27</sup> Steytler, Nico. "Federal systems of governance in Africa: Patterns and pitfalls." In *Contemporary Governance Challenges in the Horn of Africa*. Taylor & Francis, 2023.

<sup>28</sup> Boone, Catherine. *Inequality and political cleavage in Africa: Regionalism by design*. Cambridge University Press, 2024.

Corruption has become a recurrent issue both as a failure of governance and as a conflict generator.<sup>29</sup> De Waal develops the idea of the “political marketplace” to explain the commodification of power by political leaders in Africa who procure and sell political loyalties instead of establishing programmatic parties or institutions that are inclusive.<sup>30</sup> This model applies to South Sudan where patronage networks that finance the activities of conflict entrepreneurs are financed by oil revenues.

Saha and Sen indicate that corruption enhances the possibility to conflict in various ways: it diminishes the capacity of states, weakens legitimacy, generates grievances by distributing resources in an unfair way, and funds armed resistance.<sup>31</sup> They explain that the nations that belong to the top quarter of the corruption table have twice the risk of conflict compared to the nations that belong to the bottom quarter of the corruption table, even after factoring in the income levels.

#### 4-2 Political Exclusion and Marginalization

The analysis of ethnic exclusion and civil war by Bracic proves that politically marginalized ethnic groups are much more inclined to armed insurrection.<sup>32</sup> Their dataset shows that excluded groups make up a minority of the ethnic populations, but majority of rebel movements. The removal of the Tigray People Liberation Front out of the federal government of Ethiopia, in 2018, is an excellent illustration of how drastic changes in power-sharing processes may result in the emergence of large-scale violence. The ethnic politics framework by Simuziya posits that ethnic civil wars are essentially power struggles over the state and the politics of inclusion.<sup>33</sup> Electoral competition in political systems of winner takes all makes ethnically divided societies becomes an existential threat. This is a dynamic that defines the post-election violence (2007-2008) in Kenya and the frequent ethnic conflict in Ethiopia.

#### 4-3 Youth Unemployment

Economic dissatisfaction, and especially unemployment among young people, is one of the issues that have been brought out in contemporary conflict literature. The greed versus grievance model developed

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<sup>29</sup> Friedrich, Carl J. "Constitutional government and democracy: Theory and practice in Europe and America." (2025).

<sup>30</sup> De Waal, Alex. "Somalia's disassembled state: clan unit formation and the political marketplace." *Conflict, Security & Development* 20, no. 5 (2020): 561-585.

<sup>31</sup> Saha, Shrabani, and Kunal Sen. "The corruption-growth relationship: does the political regime matter?." *Journal of Institutional Economics* 17, no. 2 (2021): 243-266.

<sup>32</sup> Bracic, Ana. "Ethnicity and social exclusion." *Nationalities Papers* 50, no. 6 (2022): 1045-1056.

<sup>33</sup> Simuziya, Nsama Jonathan. "Ethnicity: A Trojan Horse for the Perpetuation of Armed Civil Conflicts in Africa." *International Journal on Minority and Group Rights* 1, no. aop (2024): 1-34.

by Collier and Hoeffler contends that unemployed youths account for masses that can be recruited into the rebel ranks at minimal expense.<sup>34</sup> Their focus on opportunity structures, however, has been criticized as playing down real grievances.

Urdal demonstrates that youth bulges and economic stagnation with political exclusion are a significant risk factor for conflict.<sup>35</sup> His study reveals that the demographic profile of the Horn of Africa; where more than 60 percent of the population is below 25 years of age; poses certain vulnerability in situations where youth unemployment accounts for over 25 percent. The analysis by Tleppayev and Zeinolla on IGAD member countries is more specific as it confirms that 1 percent rise in youth unemployment is associated with 0.16 percent rise in political instability indicators.<sup>36</sup>

#### 4-4 Somalia: Clan Dynamics and State Collapse

Isak distinguishes the era of the mediated state (1960-1991) in Somalia when the central government negotiated with clan elders, who mediated between communities, and the era of statelessness (1991-present) marked by clan militia rivalry. His argument is that the manipulation of clan divisions by Siad Barre to retain power ultimately killed the mediation system, which rendered it extremely hard to rebuild the state.<sup>37</sup>

The anthropological study by Bade accentuates that Somali clan identities are both adaptive and rooted; and these identities enable people to work together within their clans but also serve as a barrier to national unity.<sup>38</sup> These identities were then politicized under the rule of Barre, where they became fixed political identities with exclusive rights to resources and power.

Afriyie examines how the vacuum of governance in Somalia gave Al-Shabaab an opportunity to emerge and thrive, and that the extremist group offers administrative functions (dispute resolution, security, taxation) in places where there is no provision of these functions by the federal government.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Bah, Mohamed Alieu, and Foday Justice Jalloh. "Greed versus Grievance in Contemporary Civil Wars in Africa." *Bölge Çalışmaları Dergisi* 4, no. 1 (2025): 113-129.

<sup>35</sup> Urdal, Henrik. "Peace by Demographic Change." *Debating the East Asian Peace* (2017): 115.

<sup>36</sup> Tleppayev, Arsen, and Saule Zeinolla. "Forecasting Youth Unemployment Through Educational and Demographic Indicators: A Panel Time-Series Approach." *Forecasting* 7, no. 3 (2025): 37.

<sup>37</sup> ISAK, Mohamed Abukar. "THE FAILURE OF GOVERNMENTAL SYSTEM IN SOMALIA AFTER THE INDEPENDENCE." PhD diss., ONDOKUZ MAYIS UNIVERSITY, 2021.

<sup>38</sup> Bade, Zakarie Abdi. "Dialectics of Traditional Authority and Post-Colonial Modern State: The Case of Somaliland." *European Journal of Theoretical and Applied Sciences* 2, no. 1 (2024): 468-479.

<sup>39</sup> Afriyie, Frederick Appiah. "What fuels terrorism in Somalia? Perspectives from the jihadist group Al-Shabaab." *Cogent Social Sciences* 11, no. 1 (2025): 2576151.

The finding is consistent with larger body of literature that suggests that armed groups legitimize themselves by providing the governance lacking in states.

#### 4-5 Sudan and South Sudan: Oil, Identity and Partition.

The two Sudans have drawn scholarly interest as examples of how resources (oil) and identity tensions converge on governance failures to create disastrous civil wars. In his historical analysis, Kohnert establishes the origin of Sudanese conflicts to British colonial policies that had created enormous inequalities between the Arab-Muslim north and the African-Christian/animist south, which formed patterns of marginalization that were to continue after independence.<sup>40</sup>

The failure of the SPLM/A to turn into an inclusive government and instead become a liberation movement underscores the failure by the South Sudanese government to bloom into a civilized state.<sup>41</sup> Internal strife, authoritarianism, and dependence on ethnic mobilizations of the movement proffered the conditions under which the recurrence of the conflicts would take place despite peacebuilding by international forces.

Owujie describes South Sudan as a violent kleptocracy where the political elite gather riches through violence and political manipulation of oil revenues.<sup>42</sup> His analysis questions positive judgments of peace settlements by claiming that radical reforms of the government are required to facilitate the establishment of sustainable peace. The evidence provided by El Dakroury in his study on local wars in South Sudan has also shown how failures in national-level governance have percolated down to community levels where cattle-raiding and land conflicts; previously dealt with by governments, are now being militarized.<sup>43</sup>

#### 4-6 Ethiopia: Ethnic Federalism and Conflict

The system of ethnic federalism in Ethiopia, introduced in 1995, has spawned scholarly controversy. Addis believes that the official declaration of ethnic groups rights to self-determination pursuant to the

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<sup>40</sup> Kohnert, Dirk. "On the impact of the 2023 Sudanese war on Africa and beyond." (2023).

<sup>41</sup> Zona, Kakenya. "Power, bad governance and persistent conflicts in the horn of Africa: a case study of South Sudan." (2020).

<sup>42</sup> Owujie, Christopher. "Post-war interventions and security challenges in South Sudan: A Case of Peace Process." PhD diss., Kampala International University, College of Humanities and social Science, 2023.

<sup>43</sup> Owujie, Christopher. "Post-war interventions and security challenges in South Sudan: A Case of Peace Process." PhD diss., Kampala International University, College of Humanities and social Science, 2023.

system paradoxically led to greater ethnic politicization and conflict, as ethnicity became the main element in political mobilization and distributing resources.<sup>44</sup> Ethnic parties also fight to control the regional states fuelling identity-based mobilization.

Authoritarian dominance of the EPRDF (Ethiopian People Revolutionary Democratic Front), even with federal systems, led to resentment especially among marginalized communities such as the Amhara and the Oromo.<sup>45</sup> The ethnically based proclamation by the system was juxtaposed with the domination of TPLF (Tigray People's Liberation Front) until 2018, which created resentment that Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed initially vowed to address but never managed to do.

In his analysis of the 2020-2022 Tigray War, Alemayehu focuses on how the fast-changing political transition without institutional reforms upset the ethnic power-sharing agreements. The war underscores the instability of elite arrangements which are not founded on institutions and real devotion to inclusive governance.<sup>46</sup>

## 5. Conflict management and Regional Organizations

### 5-1 IGAD's Role and Limitations

In his holistic evaluation, Abd and Al Kaoud acknowledges IGAD's mediation to Sudan (which resulted in the independence of South Sudan), Somalia's stabilization, and South Sudan civil war, but points out that the pursuit of lasting peace is highly constrained.<sup>47</sup> They state that conflicting interests of member states and the reliance of IGAD on external funding are the limited factors of its success. Member states tend to pursue bilateral agendas that compromise the regional efforts, like proxy wars in Somalia between Ethiopia and Eritrea.

The case study of IGAD in Somalia by Wafula exposes the low success in promoting inclusive governance despite the military achievements in Somalia against Al-Shabaab. The IGAD-backed AMISOM (African Union Mission in Somalia) attained tactical success but did not construct legitimate

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<sup>44</sup> Addis, Amsalu K. "Ethnic Tensions and National (In) Stability in Ethiopia: Analyzing Risks of Ethnic Cleansing." *Genealogy* 9, no. 2 (2025): 37.

<sup>45</sup> Dibaba, Solomon Dessalegn. "The Merger of Ethiopia People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) in to Ethiopia Prosperity Party (EPP) and its impact on the Constitution."

<sup>46</sup> Alemayehu, Girum. "Perspectives on Ethnic Federalism in Ethiopia." PhD diss., Walden University, 2025.

<sup>47</sup> Abd Alameer, Mohammad Farouq, and Israa Sharif Al-Kaoud. "The Role of Regional Organizations in Building Peace In South Sudan: IGAD As a Model." *Journal of Ecohumanism* 3, no. 4 (2024): 1904-1912.

state institutions, which underscores that military and governance strategies to peacebuilding lack a connection between the two.<sup>48</sup>

## 5-2 Comparative Regional Organizations

The assessment of IGAD can be done in the context of the comparative literature on regional organizations. ECOWAS (Economic Community of West African States) has been more successful in conflict intervention with case studies of intervention in Liberia, Sierra Leone and The Gambia. The relative effectiveness of ECOWAS, can be rationalized by the hegemonic leadership of Nigeria, stronger institutional frameworks, and a higher financial autonomy of the organization without any outside sources.<sup>49</sup> The Peace and Security Architecture of the African Union, especially the African Peace and Security Council, is an elaborate conflict prevention and conflict resolution framework. Nonetheless, implementation challenges akin to those of IGAD; limited resources, sovereignty of member states, and implementation problems; restrain functionality. This implies that the issues facing IGAD are indicative of larger systemic problems within the African regional governance.

## 5-3 Theoretical framework

It is undeniably true that effective and transparent governance is crucial to national and regional stability and comes in handy in conflict resolution. The good governance theory illustrates the need for participation, transparency, application of the rule of law, and accountability as the core pillars of effective governance. The absence of such principles within any governance leads to institutional ineffectiveness, non-inclusivity, and corruption that undermine peace-building strategies and fuel conflict. Addink. (2017) also highlights transactional and transformational leadership as essential in conflict resolution. Transformational leaders are described as motivating and inspiring citizens towards working or coexisting under common parameters, an aspect that is crucial in dynamic conflict resolution.<sup>50</sup> On the other hand, transactional leadership is described as one that subjects the citizens to following a given routine and promotes order. The IGAD structure is framed in a manner that promotes collective security and regionalism that advocates member states' partnering to address development

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<sup>48</sup> Wafula, Everlyne. "To Assess the Successes of Igad in Conflict Resolution in the Horn of Africa: Case Study of Somalia." PhD diss., University of Nairobi, 2022.

<sup>49</sup> Aminu, Bashir Ibrahim, and Abubakar Abdullahi Muhammad. "ECOWAS AND FIVE DECADES OF IMPOTENCE." *FUDMA International Journal of Social Sciences* 5, no. 2 (2025): 385-391.

<sup>50</sup> Addink, G. H. "Good governance: importance in practice, theories, and definitions." *Halu Oleo Law Review* 1, no. 1 (2017): 1-32.

challenges and promotes shared security. However, this partnership is commonly hindered by weak leadership systems and competing national interests, hence undermining the proper functioning of IGAD.

A paradigmatic example of this theorem is Sudan that encountered delays in conflict resolution as a result of leadership inefficiencies. According to Back, the transitional leadership instituted after the overthrowing of Omar Al-Bashir's government was affected by myriads of compounding issues such as conflicting political interests, internal political divisions, and delicate institutions, amongst many others. These leadership challenges were further compounded by the deficient regional harmony signified by IGAD's inefficiencies in instituting mediation parameters. A look through the lenses of the Darfur crisis, the delayed IGAD coordination in peacekeeping efforts exacerbated the conflict and further delayed action. Other factors that undermined the peace agreement efforts included a lack of political will, poor governing bodies, and heightened corruption as a result of conflicting political interests.

Hegre *et al.* studies decompose the theorem of good governance to its aftermath effects that trickle down to formal democratic governance.<sup>51</sup> This contribution establishes this aspect as true as verified by historically formal democratic institutions' ability to avoid or mediate armed conflicts. Formal democratic institutions are constituted by formally elected leadership systems through collective voting systems and hence represent unbiased citizens' interests. Furthermore, the leadership system's demeanor is dictated by constitutional boundaries, hence enforcing the rule of law. As aforementioned, the root cause of internal conflicts in such governing systems is relative deprivation. Schulze *et al.* explain relative deprivation as a deviation between the expected needs of the citizens to the actual results delivered by the elected governing systems; however, this phenomenon is dynamic as citizens can tolerate the gap but will resolve to support opposition or armed conflict with its increase.<sup>52</sup> Hegre *et al.* conducted an intensive quantitative study that validates relative deprivation as a major cause of internal conflict, especially in cases where the legitimacy of institutions or the governing body is questionable.

A look at IGAD through the lens of Somalia presents a perfect case of this theorem where the lack of an effective governing institution has exacerbated conflict and hindered the rule of law and the intervention of IGAD. Various scholarly resources highlight a political governance vacuum since the collapse of Somalia's government in 1991, leading to a disorganized governing body spearheaded by

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<sup>51</sup> Hegre, Håvard, and Håvard Mokleiv Nygård. "Governance and conflict relapse." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 59, no. 6 (2015): 984-1016.

<sup>52</sup> Schulze, Michaela, and Rabea Krätschmer-Hahn. "Relative deprivation theory." In *Encyclopedia of quality of life and well-being research*, pp. 5877-5879. Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2024.

clan-head politicians.<sup>53</sup> These governing scenarios crippled IGAD's efforts in conflict resolution as well as other crucial development strategies. This is because clan-based governing bodies prioritizing their clan interests overshadow regional harmony, leading to biased national progress.

Another case that highlights this theorem on the role of poor governance in delayed conflict resolution is the Tigray War, an internal conflict in Ethiopia. The core factors that exacerbated this conflict include political divisions, authoritative governing policies, and exclusionary policies propagated by governing bodies. One of the unique aspects of this case was the dual role that IGAD had to assume, as Ethiopia's government was actively involved in the conflict despite being one of the regional organization's key and prominent member states. This intrastate conflict posed new challenges to the regional organization mediation strategies. According to Back. (2024) The hesitant or rather delayed response of IGAD to the conflict due to conflicting interests within its leadership systems underscores the role of leadership in mediating conflicts involving its member states, especially in case the member states themselves plays a role in the conflict.

## 6. IGAD's Mandate and Gaps

### 6-1 Historical Background and its Mission

Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) was first pronounced as a regional convention in 1996 following the dissolution of IGADD (Intergovernmental Authority on Drought and Development). The agency's member states comprise Kenya, Uganda, Djibouti, Somalia, Eritrea, Sudan and South Sudan. It is imperative to highlight the dynamic nature of this agency as its initial role was focused on tackling developmental and environmental concerns within its region; however, it expanded its role to cover other humanitarian concerns such as security concerns and national stability amongst its member states. The initial formation of an intergovernmental agency followed a UN directive to tackle the devastating famine conditions in 1983 and 1984 that led to an economic crisis in the Horn of Africa. A case study carried out by highlights that the agency faces unique challenges as the member states are affected by a web of security and political stability that trickle down to other challenges such as developmental bias and humanitarian crises.

IGAD's conflict resolution activities revolve around objectives such as preventive diplomacy,

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<sup>53</sup> Wafula, Everlyne. "To Assess the Successes of Igad in Conflict Resolution in the Horn of Africa: Case Study of Somalia." PhD diss., University of Nairobi, 2022.



post-conflict resolution, and construction, and conflicting parties' mediation. Mwea *et al.* (2021) highlight that IGAD has built a historical reputation for mediating conflicts within its jurisdiction region, such as in the Sudan internal conflicts, reinstating a sustainable Somalia government, and South Sudan conflict resolution process, amongst many other protracted conflicts.<sup>54</sup> Furthermore, a special docket, CEWARN (conflict early warning and response mechanism), is designed to predict upcoming conflicts and mitigate the risk factors to prevent escalation. However, despite the institution of these parameters, the intergovernmental agency continues to face persistent challenges, such as conflicting interests that limit their effective intervention in mediating or mitigating conflicts, as decomposed below.

## 6-2 Setbacks derailing IGAD in their peacekeeping mission

Structural weakness within the intergovernmental agency is the key challenge that limits it's in pursuing its mission. This drawback arises due to their financial dependency on external donors such as the United Nation (UN), member or external states, and the European Union. Farah Hersi *et al.* highlights this reliance on external factors leads to structural weakness as the donations comes with expectations from the external players that may not align with the missions of the Intergovernmental agency; hence limiting IGAD from its autonomy in conducting their activities independently.<sup>55</sup> Furthermore, this contribution cites a scholarly consensus on the fact that IGAD lacks sufficient institutional power to enforce their brokered guidelines that member states must abide to. A paradigmatic example of this fact is South Sudan, where the lack of IGAD's institutional capacity to effectively intervene and mediate the conflict permitted the conflict to exacerbate and resume on multiple counts.

Another key challenge that IGAD encounters is the unstable nature of the region. Various scholarly contributions have described the Horn of Africa as one of the unstable regions in the world as illustrated through the presence of extremist groups, cross-border conflicts, webs of conflict and ineffective governing bodies.<sup>56</sup> This widespread violence across different member states not only amounts to significant pressure on the agency but also jeopardizing its fast approach to emerging crisis.

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<sup>54</sup> Mwea, C. W., and C. Iteyo. "The Strategies Used by the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) in the Management of Conflicts within the Horn of Africa: Focus on the Larger Sudan." *Journal of African Interdisciplinary Studies* 5, no. 5 (2021): 136-154.

<sup>55</sup> Farah Hersi, Mohamed, and Adeoye O. Akinola. "Evolution and Transformation of IGAD." In *IGAD and Multilateral Security in the Horn of Africa: Through the Lens of the Somali Conflict*, pp. 63-94. Cham: Springer Nature Switzerland, 2024.

<sup>56</sup> Markakis, John. "The Crisis of the State in the Horn of Africa." *The Nation State: a wrong model for the horn of Africa*. Max-Planck-Gesellschaft zur Förderung der Wissenschaften, Germany (2021): 19-54.

The problem is further compounded by external influences with interests in the conflicts as illustrated by the alleged involvement of the gulf states in the Tigrayan and Somali war. Such interferences add layers of complications to the problem complicating the conflict mediation processes.

IGAD peacekeeping vision in the horn of Africa are thwarted by internal divisions either in approach to conflicts or externally. Some examples of such internal divisions include such as the border crisis between South Sudan and Sudan or Ethiopia and Eritrea conflicts that prevent a unified approach to the regional visions and challenges. Another example of internal divisions impact is Somalia's divided approach to peace resolution that has derailed the agency from addressing the core reason to the constant disputes in the regions which as resource conflict and clan disputes.

### 6-3 Gaps in Existing Literature

Although there has been a lot of research on governance and conflict in the Horn of Africa, there are still gaps. First, there are many studies on individual conflicts, but a systematic comparative analysis across many IGAD member states is still lacking. To fill this gap, this study will examine Sudan, South Sudan, Somalia, and Ethiopia through a single governance model, depicting shared trends and divergent developments. Second, the study of IGAD's conflict resolution role is not yet well established in its literature as compared to the study of ECOWAS or SADC. The existing literature tends to see IGAD as a peripheral force, as opposed to closely interrogating at the reasons why the organization seemingly fails, given its strong mandates and resources. The study adds value to the existing literature by providing a thorough examination of the structural limitations of IGAD and their impact on the region's security organization. Third, even though the relative deprivation theory is a well-developed one, its particular use towards explaining conflict recurrence in the Horn of Africa is underdeveloped. In the majority of the studies, the theory is used only in regards to conflict onset and does not consider the recurrence, while the cyclical nature of violence in the region requires the consideration of how the quality of governance impacts post-conflict trajectories. Fourth, the nexus of unemployment among youth, shortfalls in governance and conflict escalation in the context of the Horn of Africa should be more systematically analyzed. Although these factors have been examined individually, there is no integrated examination of their interplay leading to perpetuation of violence. This study is a synthesis of these dimensions to achieve a comprehensive knowledge of the dynamics of governance and conflict. Lastly, much of the current literature concentrates on the conflict drivers and does not focus sufficiently on the conflict prevention and sustainable peacebuilding strategies based on governance reform. This gap is addressed through this study as the policy recommendations are based on the empirical analysis of the failures in governance and provide the avenues of practical approach to long-term peace.

## 7. Methodology

### 7-1 Research Design

The study is based on a qualitative comparative case study design to explore the relationship between governance structures and conflict dynamics in the East and Horn of Africa. The case study methodology is suitable in studying context-sensitive phenomena; where there is an interaction of several variables which quantitative methods might not characterize comprehensively. This study enables the comparison of governance and conflict relationships in four IGAD member countries; Sudan, South Sudan, Somalia, and Ethiopia, in a systematic way, while retaining the depth of analysis, considering the unique historical, political, and social context of each country. The study employs an interpretive approach based on relative deprivation theory and principles of good governance to demonstrate how lack of good governance contributes to and propagates conflict. This theoretical prism permits an examination of not only the structural factors (institutional weaknesses, political exclusion, distribution of resources) but also the dynamics of agency (leadership failures, competition among various elites, popular grievances) that influence the course of conflicts in the region.

### 7-2 Sampling Technique

The different interrelated criteria informed the purposive sampling of the case studies, namely, Sudan, South Sudan, Somalia, and Ethiopia. First, the four states are IGAD member states, located in the Horn of Africa are regionally interdependent in security, which falls under the conflict resolution mandate of IGAD. Geographic clustering helps to analyze the regional processes in governance and the performance of IGAD as an institution. Second, the selected case studies are a reflection of different forms of conflicts; interstate war (Ethiopia-Eritrea), secessionist war (the independence of South Sudan), state collapse (Somalia), and ethnic civil war (the Tigray war in Ethiopia); this allows examining how the problems of governance can be manifested in different typologies of conflicts. Third, each of them has recurring conflict instances as opposed to single conflict instances, and hence makes them the best to the study of the relationship between governance quality and conflict recidivism. Fourth, the cases span a continuum of types of governance; between the long history of state failure in Somalia and ethnic federalism in Ethiopia; providing comparative intelligence on how different types of governance interact to churn out conflict.

### 7-3 Data Collection Methods

The study design is primarily rooted on secondary data sources since the study is analytical research; designed to identify the patterns of governance conflicts by synthesizing existing evidence. To cover and give analytical triangulation, data collection employed different types of sources. The process of data collection relied on academic literature. The systematic review of peer-reviewed journal articles, books, and dissertations on the theme of governance, conflict, and peacebuilding in the Horn of Africa was carried out. Databases such as JSTOR, Google Scholar, Project MUSE, and African Journals Online (AJOL) were interrogated. The policy and research reports of international organizations (United Nations, African Union, World Bank), regional ones (IGAD, African Development Bank), research institutes (Institute for Security Studies, International Crisis Group, United States Institute of Peace) and non-governmental organizations (Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International) were also utilized. Government documents including the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of Conflict (R-ARCSS) of South Sudan, the Provisional Constitution of Somalia and the Federal Constitution of Ethiopia were also used. The history background of the existing conflicts and governance problems were traced by referring to the historical documents during the colonial era, the historical political history after independence and the transitional justice reports. Finally, the current events, particularly the continuing conflicts were followed through credible international and regional news outlets (BBC, Al Jazeera, The East African).

#### 7-4 Data Analysis

Thematic content analysis was used to analyze the data to establish recurrent patterns, cause and effect relationship and; association between the governance and conflict outcomes. The analysis involved 6 stages, all interrelated. The initial stage was a thorough reading of collected material which gave a comprehensive understanding of governance-conflict dynamics for each case. The subsequent step was formulation of analytical codes that relied on the theoretical framework, including the dimensions of governance (participation, transparency, accountability, rule of law, corruption), the sources of conflict (relative deprivation, political exclusion, ethnic politicization, resource competition), and strategies IGAD might adopt. The third stage entailed a country-by-country analysis to identify how governance failures contributed to the sudden onset, escalation, and continued existence of conflicts. The fourth step implied structured comparison of the four cases with the aim of discovering overall tendencies and divergent paths. This comparative study revealed the universal and national contextual problems in the region's governance model. The fifth step was to infer empirical finding within the framework of relative deprivation theory and the good governance paradigms and assess to what degree they can explain the observed patterns; and in which aspects they should be refined. The final step was analysis of IGAD conflict resolution operations in relation to cases to identify structural constraints, successes, and

failures in their regional peacekeeping mandate.

## 8. Findings

### 8-1 Through the lenses of Somalia, Sudan, South Sudan and Ethiopia

Case study of conflict experienced in Somalia, Sudan, and Ethiopia depicts how governance has significantly contributed to the initiation and/or development of conflicts.

#### *Sudan*

The intercommunal conflict in Sudan was triggered by a military coup, thereby altering the transitional civil government and causing economic and political turmoil. The two years long Sudanese civil war is mainly sustained by the power struggles between Mohamed Hamdan's led Rapid Support Forces (RSF) and General Fattah al-Burhan's led Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF).<sup>57</sup> The Sudanese conflict traces back to the post-independence era; historically, the northern part of the country, dominated by Muslims and Arabs, was wealthier than the southern region, dominated by animists and Christians. The resultant relative deprivation based on region-based socioeconomic disparity intertwined with religion resulted in two earlier civil wars in the country. Following the 2019 coup, General Burhan led the Transitional Sovereignty Council, which worked on a new constitution and establishing a transitional government. However, another coup was orchestrated in 2021 led to the suspension of the constitution causing nationwide tension and demonstrations demanding civil government.

#### *South Sudan*

Equally, South Sudan has been embroiled in conflict since 2013, majorly involving key military figures and political elites. Among the evident governance challenges attributed to the war include an absence of political orientation, political goodwill, and power struggles that subsequently resulted to a rooted divide among the population. Shortly after the country attained independence in 2011, the Sudan People's Liberation Movement, which had played a role in the independence, split into factions that started competing for power.<sup>58</sup> The violence erupted following the accusation of an attempted coup

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<sup>57</sup> Afriyie, Frederick Appiah. "Sudan: Rethinking the Conflict Between Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF)." *India Quarterly* 80, no. 3 (2024): 439-456.

<sup>58</sup> Nyadera, Israel Nyaburi. "South Sudan conflict from 2013 to 2018: Rethinking the causes, situation and solutions." *African Journal on Conflict Resolution* 18, no. 2 (2018): 59-86.

allegedly orchestrated by the vice president. In 2018, Salva Kiir and Riek Machar embraced negotiations under the “Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan”. However, the implementation of the provisions of the agreement has been slow, pointing to a lack of political goodwill to resolve the conflict, thereby resulting to the collapse of the agreement. The Revitalized Transitional Government of National Unity (R-TGoNU) was developed in 2020 to oversee inclusive elections for an effective transition. The conflicts have raised concerns over the ability of the state to transition to a functional democracy as it has resulted in the postponement of elections that were scheduled for December 2024. The delay in these national elections is a reflection of the deep governance and structural crisis that the youngest country in Africa is in, which slows down its process of attaining peace.

### *Somalia*

The conflict in Somalia can be tricked down to several governance-linked factors, including the social, economic, and political inequalities between various clan members that influenced their access to political positions and resources, Barre’s regime being authoritarian and applying patrimonial rule, and the loss of the 1977 War with Ethiopia, leading to unleashing of armed clan-based Movements.<sup>59</sup>

The Somalia conflict had deep political and governance roots that go back to decades, for instance, the decades-long civil war and instability are associated with a governance structure that runs back to colonial rule.<sup>60</sup> The colonial government established a centralized system that countered the social and clan-based political system, which was the Somali tradition, causing antagonism and rivalry. To date, the clan remains to be the most crucial social structure as it has been so for centuries. Most people in Somalia identify themselves in terms of their clans, and this social element historically serves as the basis structure for maintaining law and order. The politicization of these clans during and after the colonial era led to struggles for resources and political power with the introduction of a centralized government system. This points out the origins of deprivation among clans, thereby breeding aggression and violence. During the era of Siad Barre, clan divisions were enhanced, as selected clans dominated the political class, leaving the rest of the cultures marginalized and deprived. This shows how the governance of the state was ineffective in enhancing unity across clans, thereby addressing the resultant

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<sup>59</sup> Nyadera, Israel Nyaburi, Nazmul Islam, and Billy Agwanda. "Complexity of Somalia Conflict: Features and Actors." In *The Somalia Conflict Revisited: Trends and Complexities of Spatial Governance on National and Regional Security*, pp. 91-111. Cham: Springer Nature Switzerland, 2024.

<sup>60</sup> Dersso, Solomon A. "The Somalia Conflict implications for peacemaking and peacekeeping efforts." *Institute for Security Studies Papers* 2009, no. 198 (2009): 24.

relative deprivation rooted in clan-based privileges.

Regional political and governance also played a role in catalyzing the Somalia and Ethiopia conflicts. Following the war between the two countries, the governments supported rebel groups against each other, thereby heightening both inter- and intra-state conflicts. As Barre's regime deployed armed groups to fight against Adis Ababa, the Ethiopian government supported the Somali opposition movement through the provision of military equipment, enhancing tensions within and between the countries. Following the Somalia - Ethiopian war between 1977 and 1978, the government was left drained economically and in massive debts.

In addition to the clan-based relative deprivation explanation for the Somali conflict, other elements of bad governance also fueled the conflict. First and foremost, Siad Barre's leadership came to power by overthrowing the initial regime that was elected, making it an illegitimate government. Corps highlights that fair, inclusive, and mass-representative decision-making results to effective governance and facilitates the mass's perception of legitimacy.<sup>61</sup> During Barre's regime, there was an emergence of patrimonialism – governance through patronage in maintaining power and characterized by the exclusion of various social classes from power. During this reign, Barre promoted members of his clan, the Darood clan family, within the governance structure, giving them a representation of 50% in the cabinet. The state machinery was used in alienating other clans and social groups from power and advancing political positions thereby exuberating inequalities, antagonism and mistrust across clans.

The fall of Siad Barre's regime in 1991 resulted to a civil war between the supporters of General Mohamed Farah and those of Interim President Ali Mahdi. As a result, the country was left without a central government, thereby going through a decades-long era of lawlessness, humanitarian crisis, and civil war. This weak governance structure has exacerbated the crisis by enabling the rise of extremist groups.

### *Ethiopia*

The correlation between governance and conflict also manifests in examining the Ethiopian conflicts. The political instability and violence in Ethiopia worsened in 2018 as Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed ascended to power, aggression mainly being expressed against the government by the Tigray People's Liberation Front and later from 2021 by Oromia and Amhara regions. Prior to Abiy's regime, the Tigray region had dominated the Ethiopian political leadership since 1991; however lost support as a result of

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<sup>61</sup> Corps, Mercy. 2019. Good Governance: Preventing Conflict and Building peace.

repression, corruption, and human right violations by the regime. The Tigray's reign was ended through a wide range of protests that prompted the appointment of Abiy, of the Oromo region, as the prime minister, who promised to reunite the country and uphold the freedom that was restricted by the processor. The rebirth of the conflicts was due to deteriorated ethnic relations following multiple delays of national elections and the declaration of extension of the leadership of Abiy, fueling resentment from the populace. The Tigray vs. government conflicts pulled in other regions as Oromo sided with the Tigray while Amhara sided with the government. With the aim of consolidating the central military, the government launched an operation against Oromia and Amhara, who were former enemies and allies, respectively.

The instability in the Ethiopia is a result of politicization of ethnic divides by the political class driven by personal interests.<sup>62</sup> With the political elites driven by the interests of their ethnic groups, it has become difficult for them to work together and build a national consensus with which every ethnic group is represented and involved. This, therefore, drives the concept of relative deprivation as the political culture rooted in the history of the country is one that serves the interest of a single social group, building a sense of unequal distribution of resources and political representation and, subsequently, the aggression from the disadvantaged groups. Additionally, examining how the good governance theory explains Ethiopia's recurring conflicts, peace, and operational state is best achieved when institutions produce results in meeting the needs of the society at large and appropriate use of the available resources. On the contrary, the country's political landscape has been characterized by corruption, freedom limitation, and division across ethnic groups. Hungary expresses this governance challenge by highlighting that "The lack of effective and responsive state institutions, as well as a lack of transparency and accountability in the management of public affairs, created an environment ripe for corruption. Thus, conflict is further exacerbated by poor governance and corruption. Finally, the weak institutional arrangements are aggravating conflict in the country."

## 8-2 Poor governance as the root cause of conflict

Governance structures that tend to deepen social divides between various social groups can worsen grievances, thereby causing conflict by the groups that feel excluded either socially, economically, or politically.<sup>63</sup> This correlation derives the concept of 'relative deprivation' – the feeling or judgment of

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<sup>62</sup> Siyum, BeriHu Asgele. "Underlying Causes of Conflict in Ethiopia: Historical, Political, and Institutional." (2021): 15-17.

<sup>63</sup> Zona, Kakenya. "Power, bad governance and persistent conflicts in the horn of Africa: a case study



being worse off, lacking, or deprived compared to other persons, especially with regard to social position, equity, and justice. Subsequently, deprivation explains conflict roots in states where the populations perceive the governance structure as the origin of expectation-ability discrepancy and their willingness to support armed actions in an attempt to address it. In examining the aggression and violent behavior of humans, Dollard et al., explain that unmet expectations result in anger which in turn builds up aggression. In this regard, the developed aggression by various social groups against the government due to unmet expectations including addressing inequality, ending corruption, providing opportunities, and protecting rights and freedom; make the population fight back.<sup>64</sup>

Effective governance is characterized by development and economic growth that, in turn, leads to the creation of job opportunities and vice versa. The correlation of governance and conflict is also evident through the lens of bad governance as a key catalyst of youth unemployment. While two-thirds of the population in the Horn of Africa is below the age of 25, unemployment is a major challenge for this group, who are the majority.<sup>65</sup> Between 1992 and 2013, the Horn of Africa experienced a steady increase in the rate of youth unemployment, highlighting how ineffective the region has been in terms of governance and why it is difficult to end the conflicts and attain lasting peace soon. Dan-Woniwei (2020) affirms that without significant governance improvement on development and opportunity creation, the youths are sidelines with no hope for improvement, facing a wide range of vulnerabilities, thereby creating an aspect of deprivation. An analysis by Demanke (2022) examining the correlation between youth unemployment and political instability established that a 1% decrease in youth unemployment could result in a 16% decrease in political instability. The theory of deprivation and grievance-based explanation can best illustrate how unemployment fuels conflicts.

Another catalyzing effect of bad governance on conflict is weak political leadership. Such countries with weak political leadership lack the will to develop reforms to prevent and diminish corruption, dictatorship, and economic decline and address inequalities within the state. inequality gap between the political class and the poor creates a breeding ground for banditry, terrorism, sea piracy, cattle rustling, and armed robbery. In a study by Zona (2020), 90% of respondents to a study expressed that bad governance contributed to violence in South Sudan through weak institutions, mismanagement

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of south Sudan." (2020).

<sup>64</sup> Dollard, John, Neal E. Miller, Leonard W. Doob, Orval Hobart Mowrer, Robert R. Sears, Clellan S. Ford, Carl Iver Hovland, and Richard T. Sollenberger. *Frustration and aggression*. Routledge, 2013.

<sup>65</sup> Hailu Demeke, Yemareshet. "Youth unemployment and political instability: Evidence from IGAD member countries." *Cogent Economics & Finance* 10, no. 1 (2022): 2079211.

of resources, corruption, inequality in the distribution of oil resources, slowing of democracy, and interference with the conflict resolution process.<sup>66</sup>

### 8-3 Recommendations

In addressing the conflict challenges across the East and Horn of Africa, various governance-focused reforms are necessary to achieve lasting national peace and stability. One key reform is the development of a national mechanism and policy framework promoting an inclusive and participatory approach. As highlighted, fair, inclusive, and mass-representative decision-making results in effective governance and facilitates the mass's perception of legitimacy, thereby lowering the chances of conflict recurrence.

One of the focal approaches to increasing the institutional capacity and credibility in achieving its mission is increasing its autonomy. The intergovernmental agency can increase its autonomy by reducing its financial dependence on external factors that are often tied to conditions. Molla highlights through statistical evidence from previous budgets that member states contributions only make up 15-20% of the gross contribution due to the factor of them emanating from an LDC (least developed countries) background.<sup>67</sup> This contribution further cites scholarly consensus insinuating the low level of intra-state development and trade as most of the member states produce similar goods. It is the overarching mission of the intergovernmental agency to create a unified trading space that will provide the region with leverage in the competitive markets hence growing each member state's economy. A unified region's economic space can aid in reducing the conflicting interest that would reflect in other sectors such as climatic crisis intervention and growth in infrastructure. Another manner of building IGAD's institutional capacity is through creating, strengthening and enforcing binding parameters that players must abide to foster peaceful consistence of the member states. Such binding parameters include incentives and sanctions to ensure total compliance to the laid guidelines.

Secondly, this contribution cites governance as core principle to the peaceful intra- and intra-coexistence of member states. Heally (2013) highlights that the Horn of Africa is reputable for the existence and the longevity of violence; however, this article makes a unique citation on most of the long-standing conflicts on the fact that they have a similar diplomatic approach in birthing to new states such

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<sup>66</sup> Zona, Kakenya. "Power, bad governance and persistent conflicts in the horn of Africa: a case study of south Sudan." (2020).

<sup>67</sup> Molla, Tesfaye. "The Recurrent Barriers to Effective Economic Integration in IGAD and the Way Forward." *Journal of Good Governance and Sustainable Development in Africa* 8, no. 1 (2023): 7-24.

as Eritrea and South Sudan.<sup>68</sup> However, this diplomatic approach has dented tensions between the conflicting states as illustrated through the continued conflicts on boundary agreements, resource allocation amongst many others. This contribution cites some of the effective approaches that can be instrumental in reducing such conflicts as ensuring good governance through strict surveillance on parameters that protect democracy such as judicial independence, free and fair election processes, public participation and addressing corruption. As the saying goes “prevention is better and cheaper as compared to cure”; a proper mitigation parameter such as evaluation and monitoring committees are detrimental in ensuring inclusivity and more ensuring the rule of law applies across all member states.

## 9. Conclusion

Conclusively, the Horn of Africa has been prone to inter- and intra-state conflicts that are rooted in governance challenges that are traced back to the post-colonial era. These conflicts have had adverse consequences including loss of lives, risk for future conflicts, loss of physical capital, social disorder, and poverty by negatively impacting the economy. This study has established links between governance and conflict in the horn of Africa through concepts and philosophies of relative deprivation, good governance theory, and the principle of frustration and aggression. The principle of aggression explains that anti-government conflicts arise from aggressions due to unmet expectations such as addressing inequality, ending corruption, providing opportunities, and protecting rights and freedom, making the population fight back. Additionally, the concept of relative deprivation highlights that groups that feel sidelined through inequalities in resource distribution, political representation, and service delivery in comparison to other social groups develops anger and aggression against the regime.

The key governance challenge associated with the conflicts has been politicizing of social groups such as ethnicity, religion, clan, age groups, and economic class. This politicization of social groups and perceived preferential treatment of the social groups where political class originate from makes the populations strive for election of leaders from their social groups thereby making power transition a conflict threat as this is a political phase where most countries experience political instability. Through the concept of relative deprivation, bad governance structures tend to deepen social divides between various social groups, worsening grievances and causing conflict among the groups that feel excluded

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<sup>68</sup> Healy, Sally. "IGAD and Regional Security in the Horn." In Routledge Handbook of African Security, pp. 217-228. Routledge, 2013.

either socially, economically, or politically.

It is evident that the conflicts experienced in the Horn of Africa are not new, but are recurring, creating a challenge in attaining long-lasting peace due to the deep roots these conflicts have. This study determined that good governance is essential in preventing the onset of conflict and plays a key role in preventing the recurrence of conflicts over time. In addressing the conflict challenge across the Horn of Africa, a priority action should be developing effective governance mechanisms and policy frameworks that promote an inclusive and participatory approach. The involvement of citizens in the country's affairs is essential for accountability, transparency and strategic focus on societal challenges, and equity in resource distribution.

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