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Human security in the horn of Africa: Trends and Challenges

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Abstract

The state-centered understanding of security has been changed to people-centered security, specially, in the post-cold war era. Africa, though showing great effort in the maintenance of peace and security in the continent, still faces a challenge in maintaining human security. The Horn of Africa is one of the most conflict ravaged regions in the continent. It has encountered, inter alia, political exclusion/power struggle, ethnic and religious based discrimination, piracy, terrorism, violation of human rights, proliferation of SALW, poverty/famine as a major threat to human security. The study calls for regional states to take comprehensive, integrated and prevention-oriented response both individually and collectively to reduce the dangers of human security in the region.

Keywords: Africa, Horn of Africa, Human Security, State Security.

1. The Concept of Security

Security is a controversial concept, lacking common consensus. And its conception is also subject to change as the time and circumstances changed. Many present security as absence of threat to respected values, notably threats that endanger the survival of certain referent object (Schafer, 2013). However, there exists different understanding as to what this referent object is. This study revolves around this issue. Thus, this paper devoted to the concept of security and its practical reflection in the Horn of Africa, which is one of war ravaged and unstable regions in the continent.

2. Traditional Conception of Security

Traditionally, the concept of security was associated with the national security, where state was the main concern (Brauch, *et al.*, 2011). State was the main referent object of security. Security was conceptualized as the security of the state in a sense that security of the state from military aggression. This state-centric conception of security is noted by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in its 1994 *Human Development Report* that “the concept of security has for too long been interpreted narrowly: as security of territory from external aggression, or as protection of national interests in foreign policy or as global security from the threat of a nuclear holocaust. It has been related more to nation-states than to people” (UNDP, 1994). In the earliest time, security was understood as accumulation of military and economic power as the prime goal of the time was to protect the state sovereignty. Security was purely a realists understanding of state security. It was associated with military issue and use of force (Transnational, 2007). Having this state-centric view, the policies and strategies were designed to meet the interests of nation states as well as its institutions and values instead of achieving the interests of individuals or mankind as a whole. This traditional understanding of the concept is subject to criticisms. Military power was the ultimate goal of the time, however, as Walt underscored ‘military power is not the only source of national security, and military threats are not the only dangers that states face’ (ibid). It is also noted that:

..... *'defining national security merely (or even primarily) in military terms conveys a profoundly false image of reality.'* He argues that the emphasis on military threats arising from beyond the borders of one's own country is doubly misleading. First, it draws attention away from the non-military threats that may undermine the stability of nations. Second, it presupposes that threats arising from outside a state are somehow more dangerous to its security than threats that arise within it (ibid).

The dangers of intrastate violence were not considered in understanding the concept of security.

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Moreover, state-centric pattern of security did not show the possibility of citizens' oppression by the government itself (Schafer, 2013). Hence, it was narrowly pursued with no concern to the security of the daily life of the people. However, UNDP came up with a new concept of *Human Security* focusing on the issue of human rights, protection from violence and sustainable development (UNDP, 1994). This will be discussed herein under.

3. Post-Cold War Conception of Security

The concept of human security was born in the early 1990s. The end of cold war period came to realize the existence of multiplicity of non-military security threats (Coudray *et al.*, 2006). Consequently, UNDP came up with a new concept of 'Human Security' focusing on the issue of human rights, protection from violence and sustainable development (UNDP, 1994). The concept of human security was derived from, *inter alia*, the "responsibility to protect"-the idea that if the government failed to protect its citizens or the government itself threatens its citizens, the international community has the responsibility to protect them (Schafer, 2013). The main concern of human security is humankind; they are at the center, unlike the earliest understanding of security (Brauch, *et al.*, 2011). The belief that state security is impossible without security of its citizens as well as citizens of others contributed to the emergence of this concept. It is evident that the tendency of current conflicts is more of within states than between states. Hence, security in terms of the well-being of human beings is pivotal. Based on this new understanding of the concept, human security embodied with the 'human elements' of security, rights and development (UN, 2009). It capitalizes individuals' protection and empowerment.

Human security is a multidimensional concept. According to UN (2009), it incorporates the following characteristics:

- people-centered
- multi-sectoral
- Comprehensive
- Context-specific
- Prevention-oriented

The first feature of human security denotes the centrality of human beings in analyzing diverse security treats. How people are affected by diverse circumstances. It also stands for prioritizing human wellbeing, welfare, dignity and human life as a whole. The second feature attempts to show the broad understanding of human security threats and the multidimensional causes of insecurity. The third aspect of human security portrays the need of an integrated and multidimensional response to diverse security treats. The fourth aspect of human security denotes the need to respond to insecurities at their context. The reaction should be targeted on insecurities in accordance with the context of their occurrence. The fifth aspect of human security shows the prioritization of prevention in addressing the dangers of security. Prevention is better than cure!

From the above attributes of human security one can safely understand the significant change in the conception of security by placing human beings at the center substituting the traditionally referent object, which is state. The idea is that human-centered security has paramount importance for national, regional and global stability making the traditional and modern understandings interrelated (Mwagiru, 2008). One can also understand from the above aspects of human security the need to take a comprehensive, people-centered

and integrated measure so as to bring a full-fledge security. According to Mwagiru (2008) "human security had two components: "freedom from fear and freedom from want" in other words, absence of violence and war and absence of hunger and illness". These elements are the prevailing phenomenon and daily orders of the Horn of Africa (ibid). The discussion herein under stresses on security trends in Africa and Horn of Africa in particular.

4. What Trends In Africa? Past and Present

Africa had been subject to serious insecurity. African countries had suffered most terrible form of exploitative colonialism besides the interstate and intrastate conflicts. The security of African countries was highly endangered by the incursion of colonial European countries. As a result, there was a great concern of security of member states. Upon this great concern, Pan-African movement was initiated abroad so as to secure African states. Subsequently, the Organization of African Unity (OAU) was established in 1963 in response to the external domination (Kumar, 2009). African leaders showed strong commitment in joining hands for African liberation, adhering to the principle of 'African solutions for African problems' (Cervenka, 1977; Kumar, 2008). Since some African countries were still under the yoke of colonialism, OAU from its very establishment assumed the task of supporting collective struggles for liberation (Cervenka, 1977; Abubakar, 2008). Accordingly, OAU had played a great role in the liberation of the continent and the development of a common identity and unity in the continent (Hassan, 2006; Siradag, 2012). However, since OAU was pre-occupied with the program of anti-colonialism, it was found to be inefficient to respond to other challenges encountered, especially in the maintenance of peace and security in the continent. It was incapable of effectively addressing interstate and intrastate conflicts in the continent (Cervenka, 1977; Siradag, 2012). Moreover, the OAU adhered to the inviolability of the principle of sovereignty, territorial integrity and non-interference. For this reason, it could be a silent observer of intrastate conflicts in the continent, leaving aside intrastate conflicts as an exclusive mandate of the concerned governments (Abubakar, 2008; Murithi, 2008; Kumar, 2009; Moller, 2009).

What one can understand from the above discussion is that great concern of the time was to defend member counties from external aggression and danger. Putting it differently, intrastate conflicts, which were the cause for destruction of huge materials and loss of life of many people, were not in the ambit of OAU at that historical juncture. OAU was not aimed to look at the local conditions within the member states. How peoples in the member states were treated was not the concern of the OAU. This was the exclusive authority of respective member states. Besides, leaders of the time were not devoted to the wellbeing of the people, rather to defend their country from external attack. This clearly shows the narrow conception of security by African leaders.

Observing the weakness of OAU, African leaders decided to establish African Union (AU). Accordingly, AU was established in 2002 in the inaugural meeting held in Durban, South Africa, to deal with the multifaceted nature of problems in the continent. Unlike the OAU, the security concept of AU widened to include democracy, respect of human rights, accountability, good governance and political openness (Bogland, *et al.*, 2008; Solomon, 2011). Member states in the Constitutive Act "determined to promote and

protect human and peoples' rights, consolidate democratic institutions and culture, and to ensure good governance and the rule of law" in the continent. This shows AU's dramatic shift of focus from OAU's state-centric conception to human-centered security as it is devoted to the rights and interests of citizens. It came up with a broad vision for African people to the extent of protecting citizens' wellbeing within the member states. This is underscored in the introduction of the principle of intervention.

Accordingly, leaders of African states conceded to the AU's power of intervention to rescue the people from a grave suffering, which is not provided for in UN Charter (Bogland, *et al.*, 2008). In the interest of maintenance of peace and security in the continent, AU introduced the principle of intervention in the domestic affairs of individual countries in the cases of circumstances like genocide and severe violation of human rights. This is stipulated under article 4 (h) of the Constitutive Act, being a major departure of AU from its predecessor. AU introduced this principle as a solution for the increasing nature of intrastate conflicts in Africa, which was apparent from the experience in Somalia, Rwanda, and Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), among others. This trend in the AU clearly shows the significant shift in the conception of security. The general wellbeing of the people considered as the prerequisite to the security of the continent at large.

Though efforts are being made conflicts and insecurity of human beings continued to be the order of the day. Cases, *inter alia*, in Congo, Sudan, South Sudan, Somalia, and Nigeria could be mentioned as recent evidence of challenges to human security in Africa. Some of those countries will be dealt in the subsequent sections.

5. What Trends In The Horn Of Africa? Past and Present

The above discussion is general and at the continental level. Here the focus is how the issue of human security is being entertained in the Horn of Africa. This study considers Greater Horn of Africa, which comprises of Sudan, Uganda, Ethiopia, Kenya, Eritrea, Somalia, and Djibouti. Horn of Africa is one of the most war-torn areas in the continent. Inter-state conflicts have been challenging the region's security.

5.1 Inter-State Conflicts

The Horn of Africa has been the main land of interstate conflicts as compared to other parts of the continent (Kidane, 2011). These interstate conflicts have been experienced before and after the post-independence era. The interstate conflicts have been a great danger to the wellbeing of the people. Conflicts emanated out of, *inter alia*, absence of rational policies, ill-demarcated borders, lack of resource and prevalence of poverty (Endalcachew, 2014).

One major conflict was that fought between Ethiopia and Somalia from 1977-78. This conflict was caused by the aspiration of Somalia to create Greater Somalia by incorporating, *inter alia*, Somali-inhabited Ogaden region of Ethiopia. The other conflict between the two countries was one that happened between 2006 and 2009. Ethiopia intended to remove the Islamic Courts of Union (ICU), which controlled large part of Somalia, because it believed that the group had the intention of uniting all Somalis (Kidane, 2011). This, in turn, would have adverse effect on the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ethiopia. The conflict brought casualties on both sides. While Ethiopia succeeded

in terms of removing ICU, the instability and human insecurity of Somalia remained intact.

As far as inter-state conflict is concerned, the Ethio-Eritrea conflict cannot also be left unmentioned. The Ethio-Eritrea border conflict of 1998-2000 was another interstate conflict witnessed in the region. As Kidane (2011) noted, the Ethio-Eritrea border conflict may perhaps the largest conflict in the region in the post-independence period in terms of casualty figures. This conflict caused a horrific effect on both sides of the countries. The war produced a great impact on social, economic and political life of the society. This war taken the life of approximately 50 000 to 100 000 people (Kidist, 2011). Currently, these two countries are in a condition of no peace no war. Hence, the potential threat between them is still unresolved. The conflict between North Sudan and South Sudan in the post independence of South Sudan is the latest manifestation of interstate conflict in the region. Secession of South Sudan with resourceful areas brought discontent in the part of North Sudan. Besides, the presence of contentious boundary and both countries' over reliance on oil revenue hastened the conflict (Endalcachew, 2014). Even though the long standing civil wars were ended by the independence of South Sudan, the conflict between these two countries remain a major threat to the peace and security of themselves and their respective people.

The border dispute between Eritrea and Djibouti in 2008 is also one manifestation of recent interstate conflict in the Horn of Africa. Eritrea's encroachment into Ras Doumeira area in Djibouti led to the outbreak of Eritrea-Djibouti hostilities (Ira and Lantier, 2008). This led for the unnecessary suffering of the people. Indeed, Eritrea-Djibouti border has been the bone of contentions between these two countries for long period of time. The Kenya-Somalia dispute during Kenya's shifita war from 1963-1967 was also another interstate conflict experienced in the region which caused a threat to their respective people. Uganda and Sudan also experienced interstate conflict due to their support of each other's rebel group.

The major cause of interstate conflicts was territorial contiguity (Vadala, 2003). It has been argued that territorial issue has been the major factor that led to conflict and war with neighboring countries as compared with other non-territorial issues. Putting it differently, "the more borders a state has, the more likely it is to have territorial conflicts" (ibid). This is clear from Ethiopian experience of interstate conflicts with Somalia and Eritrea. Hence, territorial case has been at the core of conflict generating circumstances. However, it does not mean that interstate conflicts in the Horn of Africa are limited to territorial issues. As stated above, absence of rational policies, lack of resource and prevalence of poverty have also contributed. Still the Horn of Africa is in crisis. Regional countries have been exercising political strife and turmoil. Though interstate conflicts are calming down, intrastate conflicts are still remain to be the order of the day. Putting it differently, the region has been threatened not only by interstate conflicts but also by intrastate conflicts and other local and national grievances and identity politics as will be discussed below. In this regard, one can mention the crises in Darfur, Somalia, South Sudan, Ethiopia and Uganda, among others. These conflicts have a multifaceted nature of causes. People of the region are subject to persistent conflict, insecurity and unpredictable life condition. The condition of human security in the region and Africa at large is most fragile (OSAA, 2005). Thus, the

following section examines the major factors which undermine human security in the Horn of Africa.

6. Major Causes of Human Insecurity

Herein under discussed human security threats are not mutually exclusive in a sense that they are complementary and reinforce each other. One security threat causes, or caused by, the other one. Thus, the distinction made only for the sake of convenience and easy understanding. Besides, those causes are enumerative not exhaustive. At the top of that, these security threats are emanated either from domestic or external.

a) Political exclusion/power struggle

African leaders in general and the Horn of Africa leaders in particular have been devoted to power monopoly. This, in turn, led for the exclusion of certain groups which are not in the political position. The whole effect of this is the arousal of the downtrodden section of the society, and thereby causing a grave crisis on the wellbeing of the society. Confining the concern to the Horn of Africa, civil wars in Sudan were associated with political exclusion of the southerners by Arab north. The Arab Muslims were dominating the black southern ethnic groups, which were fighting for autonomy and self determination. This was the result of blind amalgamation of two incompatible ethnic groups by the British colonial administration. Most importantly, the historical British favor on the Arabs spilled over to the post-independence civil wars.

Power competition served as one major driving force of conflict between different factions among Horn of Africa countries. The political friction, within South Sudan Liberation Movement (SPLM), between Kiir and Machar is one of the principal factors which led to the outbreak of the latest violence in South Sudan (Endalcachew, 2014). The current crisis in South Sudan is the result of power struggle between the leaders of the two dominant ethnic groups. The conflict came out of the Machar's exclusion from the upcoming 2015 election. Now, the conflict holds ethnic dimension and continues to cause grave human insecurity. The ongoing civil war resulted in the loss of the life of over 20,000 people and the displacement of many millions (Phan, 2014). Thus, political competition within the state itself inevitably brings human insecurity. This undermines the exclusive conception of state security, thereby showing the complementary nature of both dimensions of security conception.

b) Ethnic and religious based discrimination/dominance

The dominance of one ethnic group and the exclusion of the other from the enjoyment of equal rights and freedoms characterized conflicts in the Horn of Africa. Imposing the identity of one dominant ethnic group over others had been one factor that irritated those subjected groups, and thereby led to the outbreak of restless violence within the countries and claimed the life of many residents.

This issue was a very established fact in Sudan before the secession of the Republic of South Sudan. Among other things, conflicts in Sudan were deeply rooted in identity politics. The civil wars were between the northern Arabs and black southerners. The Khartoum

government excluded blacks from power and imposed fundamentalist political Islam on the southerners, which are mostly Christians. As a result of this ethnic based discrimination and oppression, the Islamists who hold power in Khartoum confronted with the SPLM, which struggle for secularism and self-determination. The uneven development between those ethnic groups also exacerbated the ethnic conflicts.

Ethnic based discrimination is against the notion of human rights and human dignity which call for equal treatment of all. Religious and ethnic based violence is not also nonexistent in Ethiopia. Ethnic based competition and deprivation also characterized the Kenya's political system (Vadala, 2003). The bottom line is ethnic and religious differences have served as source of conflict.

c) Piracy

The danger of maritime criminal activities is apparent in the Horn of Africa, which is detrimental to human security. The region is known by maritime piracy activities as evident from the attack of 240 ships from January 2009 to July 2010 (Kolawole, 2011). Somalia, especially Punt land, has served as a base for pirates. Pirates often hijack ships, cause a danger to human security and affect the economy. The reason why Somalia serves as a safe haven for pirates' operation in the area is the fragility of the state (ibid). Putting it differently, security problems on land have spilled over and affected maritime security severely. Generally, maritime crimes have very devastating effect on human security. As Hurlburt (2013) outlined, the crimes of piracy have caused enormous physical abuse, psychological trauma and economic impact. Thus, it needs high attention as one component of security threat by the concerned security organizations.

d) Terrorism

The term terrorism is a very difficult term which lacks consensus among scholars of the area as to its meaning. Different bodies define the term terrorism in different ways. However, for the purpose of this study the author found the definition given by UN Secretary General report persuasive, and others also provided definitions which have greater resemblance with it. Accordingly, terrorism is "any act intended to cause death or serious bodily harm to civilians or non-combatants with the purpose of intimidating a population or compelling a government or an international organization to do or abstain from doing any act" (Memar and Solomon, 2014). A calculated murder of civilians or innocent people is at the center of the definition of the term, as also defined by others. This makes terrorism different from other forms of violence such as war.

The Horn of Africa has been one of the most terrorism affected regions in the world pressing the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) to take the proactive measures so as to maintain human security (ibid). Several terrorist acts and attempts have been made in the region imposing great terror on the people. In this regard, it is worth mentioning the bombing of US embassies. In 1998 Al-Qaeda attacked the two US embassies in Nairobi, Kenya and Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, which resulted in the killing of more

than 300 people and injuring many others (Wyk, 2007). In addition, Al-Qaeda's wing in the eastern Africa, Al-Shabaab, committed terrorist attack on Kampala, Uganda in 2010, because of Uganda's support to AMISOM in consolidating the TFG and restoring peace in the country. The tragedy resulted in the loss of the life of 76 people and wounding 85 others. This increased human insecurity and regional insecurity.

e) Violation of Human Rights

Human rights are entitlements that every human being enjoys because of being a human person. The very purpose of human rights is to protect the dignity of human beings. These rights are recognized under international conventions. Human rights and human security have a strong relationship. In this regard one has to look at the essence of article 3 of the UDHR. Accordingly, it is stated that "everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of the person". Human security is reflected at the center of this provision. Other treaties on human rights also deal with human rights the protection of which is essential for the enhancement of human security. However, the prevailing realities in the Horn of Africa show poor observance to those inherent rights of human beings. Mwangi (2008) affirms that the Horn of Africa is at a deteriorating condition in areas of respecting, protecting and promoting fundamental rights and freedoms, mentioning Sudan, Somalia, Kenya and Uganda as typical instances. It is apparent that the region is characterized by recurring conflicts and massive violation of human rights, thereby threatening the security of human beings. Hence, the prevailing internal conflicts in the region have significant impact on the wellbeing and welfare of the people.

f) Small Arms and Light Weapons

The cross border transit of small arms and light weapons (SALW) is also one major security challenge which ignited the prevailing tensions in the regional states. They added fuel to the fire. They have been serving as the means for terrorists, insurgents, and organized criminal syndicates, and thereby undermining all aspects of security and development effort throughout the Horn of Africa region (Finlay, N.D). The post-independence armed attack in the Horn of Africa region necessitated for the importation and domestic production of those weapons (ibid). The existence of porous borders and the collapse of Somalia's central government facilitated the trading and operation of SALW by those who fought in the border areas. The overall impact of SALW on human security in the region best summarized as follows.

The impact of SALW goes beyond the immediate death the weapons create. Their abundance and availability also have a deleterious impact on overall security dynamics. Arms facilitate, increase, and exacerbate violent crimes, carjacking, highway robberies, abductions, extortions, poaching, terrorism, and piracy. Because governments in the region cannot provide adequate security for their citizens, civilians may acquire weapons for personal and family protection, contributing to a gun culture in many Eastern African countries (ibid).

g) Poverty/famine

The Horn of Africa has been characterized by recurrent natural disaster like drought and flood. As a result of this, countries of the region faced food crisis. Accordingly, Ethiopia, Somalia and Eritrea have been highly relied on external support to feed their people (Wyk, 2007). Due to the poor planning and mismanagement on the part of the government people in the region suffer from food insecurity, which in turn led for exacerbation of the prevailing tension (Kejiaku, 2012).

7. What measures are being taken?

As can be inferred from the discussion above, the necessary measures are being taken in the region so as to address especially violent conflicts in the continent. A great effort has been made by the AU in the area of maintaining peace and security in the continent at large and in the Horn of Africa in particular. In this regard, it is worth mentioning the case of Somalia, Sudan and other countries of the continent. The especial concern given to the peace and security of the continent can also be observed from the peace and security architecture that AU established. However, in terms of taking comprehensive and integrated measure to solve the multifaceted threats of human security, Africa has gone limited. Human security is not something strange concept for Africa at the theoretical level. The discourse of human security is prevalent in the continent. In this connection, it would be important to mention African Human Security Initiative (AHSI) which is a network of seven non-governmental research organizations focusing on examining the effort and action of member states in addressing certain human security challenges in Africa. However, practical solutions in the continent are minimal.

In the Horn Africa too, member states have been participating in the conflict management process under the umbrella of Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD). With special focus on the Horn of Africa, African Peace Forum (APF) is also established in Nairobi, Kenya. Its objective is to contribute to efforts in preventing, resolving and managing conflict by engaging state and non-state actors collaboratively towards lasting peace and enhanced human security. To this end, it activities focus on research, workshop, and policy forums, among others (Wyk, 2007). However, the prevailing security threats discussed above approve that no tangible comprehensive and integrated measure has been taken to reduce threats of human security in the region.

8. Conclusion

Traditionally, security had been understood as the security of states from external military aggression. The situation in the post-cold war period, however, realized the existence of a multiplicity of non-military security threats. Accordingly, the idea of human security has been propagated highly after the release of the 1994 UNDP *Human Development Report*. Human security places human being at the place of state in the security analysis. It capitalizes the wellbeing and empowerment of the people. AU in this regard has tried to maintain peace and security in the continent by intervening in the domestic crises of member states. However, conflicts still persist, imposing security threat on the people. The Horn of Africa is not an exception in this regard. It has experienced interstate and intrastate conflicts. Currently,

internal problems are the most dangerous causes to human insecurity in the region. The insecurity come out of, *inter alia*, political exclusion/power struggle, ethnic and religious based discrimination, piracy, terrorism, violation of human rights, proliferation of SALW and poverty/famine. Due to this fact, human security in the Horn of Africa is at a critical condition demanding proper and timely solution. Though external threats are reduced in the region, internal grievances and instabilities remained to be the order of the day. It is safe to deduce that human security and state security are not mutually exclusive and neither can be attained independently; instead they complement and reinforce each other. Thus, comprehensive, integrated and prevention-oriented response to the multifaceted dangers of human security is desperately needed in the Horn of Africa and Africa at large.

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