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John Markakis, Günther Schlee, and John Young:

Introduction

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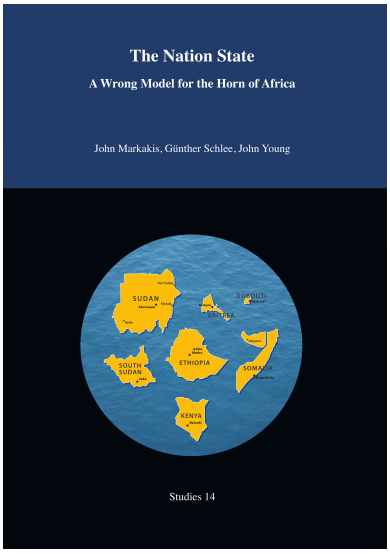

In: John Markakis, Günther Schlee, and John Young: *The Nation State : A Wrong Model for the Horn of Africa*
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Chapter 1
Introduction

John Markakis, Günther Schlee, and John Young

The modern states in the Horn of Africa are the product of historical developments beyond their control. Having shifted from the bipolar pattern of the Cold War to the unipolar pattern dominated by the US, the international geopolitical system now appears to be shifting toward a multipolar pattern, in which the US retains military superiority but is no longer able to maintain a global hegemonic status. Ideals of state sovereignty bequeathed by the Treaties of Westphalia and later by the Treaty of Versailles are now challenged by globalization, a process that entrenches a hierarchical order among states, increasingly based on economic criteria. At the same time, the supranational influence of global corporations, international trade agreements, the Bretton Woods institutions, and the European Union further undermine state sovereignty.

As a result of these conflicting forces, states throughout the world are facing a multifaceted crisis of legitimacy, sovereignty, and democracy, a crisis that began with the adoption of neoliberal precepts in the economy and governance in the West. These guiding principles then spread to, or were imposed on, the rest of the world; the consequences are still seen today. Local and national economies are undermined, and the traditional responsibility of states to protect their citizens' welfare is overridden by foreign commitments. These decisions particularly impact many states in the Middle East and Africa, where their governments were destabilized and their peoples suffered.

The Horn of Africa is distinguished from the rest of the continent by the exceptionally high incidence of political conflict experienced since decolonization at both the inter-state and intra-state levels. Distinct from the rest of Africa, the region has seen the appearance of two new *de jure* independent states (Eritrea and South Sudan), one new *de facto* independent state (Somaliland), several regions under the control of insurgent movements, and large areas that are only nominally under the control of central governments. The outbreak of civil war between the Ethiopian government and the regional government of Tigray in November 2020, which has also involved forces from Eritrea, not only speaks to the inherent political instability in the region, but also suggests that the process of state formation may not be complete.

The Horn has experienced several inter-state wars, the engagement of outside armies in conflicts in Somalia and South Sudan, and Western-dominated peace processes that serve to reorder and reconstruct the regional state pattern and bring favored elites to power. The Cold War waged hotly in this region by states acting as proxies of foreign powers. More recently, the same states have become entangled in the US-sponsored Global War on Terror (GWOT). Currently, the Horn has become a point of conflict between China and the US and countries in the Middle East are establishing military bases along the Red Sea and all of

them view the region as a linchpin for resources, markets, influence in Africa, and a focal point for competition among themselves.

The study presented here seeks to address the root causes of the Horn's troubled modern political history. Many of these causes are endogenous and testify to the agency of the people in the region. Others are extraneous, such as many-sided, continuous, and forceful interventions from abroad by foreign powers seeking to promote and protect their interests in the region, often by striking alliances with local ruling elites. Conflicts that arise thereof invariably focus on the state, because that is where power is concentrated and access to power ensures access to resources. State power is both the goal of conflict and the means whereby it is waged, making the state both the object of conflict and a party to it.

Given the record of state failure to manage conflict in the region, the question raised in this study is whether the Western nation-state model adopted, or claimed to have been adopted, in the Horn and generally in Africa is suitable for the region today. During the Cold War, the heady promise of modernization-cum-Westernization dogma was forcefully challenged from the neo-Marxist perspective, with particular emphasis on the nature of the postcolonial state. Theories such as dependency (Frank 1966), development of underdevelopment (Rodney 1972), and world systems (Wallerstein 1974) were at the center of the debate. With the subsequent triumph of neoliberalism and the enthronement of the free market ideology, the debate ran out of steam. The study presented here aims to revive the debate by questioning whether the Western nation-state is the right model for Africa, and to encourage Africans to consider alternative methods of governance for the continent.

The introductory chapter begins with a brief examination of how the present international system developed and then reviews the critiques of the state that began soon after the promises of African independence were not met. It then considers how the state in Africa has developed and repeatedly been reconstructed in response to decolonization and neoliberalist pressure to meet the needs of the West. It also considers the role of internationally led peacemaking efforts, another means by which the West projects its influence to reconstruct and even create states in the post-Cold War era.

1.1 Contextual Overview

The international state system is often called the Westphalian system. This term may be a shorthand used by political scientists[1]. But arguably, the Treaties of Westphalia first formulated the principles of sovereign statehood, non-interference in the affairs of other states, and a balance of power between states (Kissinger 2014). However, these principles were only meant to be applied in Europe, where they were conceived. President Woodrow Wilson is credited with the idea of national self-determination, which figured as a guiding principle in the Treaty of Versailles. But when Ho Chi Minh appeared at Versailles to plead for the right of his people to independence, Wilson refused to see him. It became clear that the right to self-determination did not apply to the colonized peoples.

It was only after World War II that the right to national self-determination was recognized for colonized peoples. From this point onwards, each state was granted one vote at the

[1] Rüdiger Wolfrum, an international lawyer, insightfully commented that the concept of nation-state may have originated elsewhere. For the present purpose, and because of our focus on Africa, it is sufficient to use the shorthand term. What we mean by Westphalian order is the present global order of nation-states, whose essential features developed in Europe. How precisely they developed there is beyond the scope of this book.

UN General Assembly, regardless of size. At the same time, however, the principle of equality was rejected in the organization of the newly formed UN Security Council, which revived the principle of hierarchy among states by limiting membership to the so-called Great Powers. This became obvious to Africans after decolonization, when they realized their newly independent states stood at the bottom rung of the international hierarchy of states, and their independence was seriously constrained by the former colonial states and recently emerged world superpowers at the apex of the hierarchy.

The disparity between the so-called First and Third Worlds was clearly manifested during the Cold War between the superpowers and was denounced by Kwame Nkrumah who coined the term *neocolonialism*. "The essence of neo-colonialism," he wrote, "is that the State which is subject to it is, in theory, independent and has all the outward trappings of international sovereignty, but its economic system and thus its political policy is directed from outside."[2] Nkrumah's insight updated Lenin's (Lenin 1917a) analysis, which contended that capitalism requires colonies for investment and a market for the metropole's manufactured goods.

Frantz Fanon (Lenin 1913) advanced this theory to conclude that the rulers of neocolonial states do not derive their authority from the will of the people, but from the support of their former colonial masters and the international community. Just as that support is bequeathed to local rulers, so can it also be taken away. Fanon drew particular attention to the Westernized, educated African elite who had gained the most from the colonial system and he held them responsible for undermining African state sovereignty after independence.

Contributing to the artificiality of the African state is the context in which decolonization took place. In most cases, decolonization was not the result of mass popular struggles by colonized peoples for independence. The background for the so-called liberation struggle was the enfeeblement of the European colonial states in the wake of World War II and their subsequent involvement in the Cold War that opened the door for Soviet Union involvement in support of African nationalists. It also raised the fear of communism spreading in Africa. With notable exceptions that involved European settler regimes fighting to stay in power—Algeria, Angola, Mozambique, Portuguese Guinea (modern day Guinea Bissau), Zimbabwe, and South Africa—decolonization was essentially a process of negotiation whereby Africans passed from colonialism to neocolonialism.

The Cold War was intensely waged on an ideological plane, where the specter of socialism that haunted the West proved a powerful stimulus for the formulation of a counter theory of development grounded on the experience of the West. This concept was made clear in the title of the most influential statement of this theory, Walter Rostow's book *The Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto* (1960). The belief that radically different societies would follow the same path to development as that trodden by the West has guided Western engagement in Africa to this day. Adherence to this ideology is a condition for Western economic assistance and political support in the developing world, imposing severe constraints on state sovereignty.

The attempt to economically, culturally, and politically tie African states to the West did not end with neocolonialism and a self-serving modernization theory. Western solutions to Western problems continued to be exported to the African continent. In response to falling profits, growing trade union militancy, and the loss of large parts of the world to socialism in

[2] Kwame Nkrumah, as quoted in A. Webster (Webster 1990, 7).

the 1970s, the Western elites fought back with a new ideological construct—neoliberalism—that the peripheral states were pressed to adopt. Having practiced post-World War II Keynesian precepts with notable successes, including the critical role of the state in development and the commitment to full employment, the Anglo-West now held that free markets alone were the route to development. With this mindset, the existing state was seen as an obstacle to development and must be reconstructed.

Neoliberalism objectives center on the strengthening and reform of capitalism to make it a global system, which by definition means reaching beyond the Western metropoles. Africa, in particular, was targeted, where many were not integrated into the international economy and the majority of people had not been separated from their primary means of production—land. Considered obstacles to development occurred where the developmental process was equated with market dominance. In these cases, traditional economies were deliberately undermined and the limited social programs in existence were reduced or eliminated. Indeed, the dependency and Marxist contention that relationships between the center and the periphery produced underdevelopment was rejected by neoliberal economists who instead insisted that underdevelopment was due to Africa's lack of integration into the global economic and state system.

Furthermore, once neoliberalism passed from a theory to established Truth, accepted by all the capitalist states and even their social democratic parties (witness the Labour Party under Tony Blair), it was forced on the peripheral states through the West's control of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank and a series of international trade agreements. The capitalist West, together with these organizations, imposed structural adjustment programs (SAPs) and used the World Trade Organization (WTO) and bilateral trade agreements to closely integrate peripheral states and economies into the Western-dominated global system. The implementation of neoliberal policy involved reducing the role of the state in the economy by privatizing state assets, rolling back social, health, and education programs, eliminating the kind of trade barriers that the leading Western states had themselves employed to industrialize, floating their currencies, removing obstacles to the repatriation of profits, and generally ensuring multinational corporations would have unhindered access to their economies. As in the West, these policies lowered living standards for most people, increased inequality and social tensions, and undermined the authority (and hence the capacity) of the state.

A critical point of pressure for the West in its dealings with troublesome Third World countries is the practice of withholding economic assistance and, crucially, debt relief. Both are only forthcoming if countries meet the requirements of the World Bank and IMF, which demand adherence to the precepts of neoliberalism. Again, acceptance of these conditions means relinquishing the authority of the state and granting it to these institutions and international trade agreements. Refusal to abide by these requirements can expose rebellious countries to Western campaigns of economic and political subversion and even military intervention.

Pressure increased on peripheral states with the end of the Cold War when the Eastern Bloc could no longer provide support for alternative roads to development. The Cold War victors now held that a free market economy was integral to democracy while policies that gave too much room to regulation interfered with free markets and were deemed antithetical to democracy. The growing inequalities within and between states were held to be a necessary product of development. Neoliberal notions of democracy involved governments

following the dictates of the IMF and turning their backs on their people protesting against changes that lowered their standard of living. Instead of governments of peripheral states being accountable to their citizens, governments were made subjects to the West and the global economic institutions it created. The parochialism and authoritarianism of modernization theory had returned with a vengeance.

1.2 Nation and State in Africa

The state and the nation are concepts that have evolved along separate lines but converged (with different levels of success) to form what we now call the nation-state. The state has evolved through different forms in various parts of the globe; from city states at one end to vast empires at the other. *Nation* is a Latin concept that evolved in Europe and acquired its present meaning and prominence in modern times; it is a product of Western modernity. The marriage of the two spawned the ideology of nationalism with its ideal of a culturally homogeneous society, underpinning the state with legitimacy and loyalty. This fusion took place in the unique conditions of Europe, as feudalism was superseded by capitalism within states dominated by the bourgeoisie that wanted national markets and states to protect and administer them. This model was transposed to Africa, a vastly different world, without the slightest concession to its uniqueness and the results have been tragic.

Even as they were compelled to accept the colonial model, the more thoughtful among Africa's first generation of leaders were sensitive to the incongruity involved and fought for some form of wider unity to underpin the African state. At the end of the twentieth century, Julius Nyerere lamented "the glorification of the nation-state [that] we inherited from colonialism, and the artificial nations we are trying to forge from that inheritance. Fortunately, we were not completely successful."[3] Nevertheless, succeeding generations of African political elites have considered the nation-state as the holy grail of modernization, and made national integration the highest political value. Since most newly independent African states did not comprise homogeneous nations, homogeneity needed to be achieved by nation building, even by force if necessary. The forceful pursuit of nation building has been the cause of unending conflict in Africa, especially in the Horn, with ethnic cleansing, massive population displacement, successive waves of refugees, political instability and enormous human suffering. In the emotive words of Basil Davidson (1992), it has been a "curse" and the "Black man's burden."

The political dynamics that reflect an African reality still in the preindustrial stage—a social fabric defined by ethnicity and a flamboyant multiculturalism that defies homogeneity—are fundamentally different from those that prevailed in the West and molded the nation-state model imposed on Africa. Ethnoculturalism (derided as tribalism) is invariably cited as the source of political instability that has undermined modern government in Africa. However, ethnoculturalism is a reality, a fact of life. Like the nation, it is a social construct, neither timeless nor universal. While there has always been cultural and linguistic variation in Africa, the features that define these variations often shifted gradually and formed cultural continua, rather than delineating discrete groups. In many cases, strictly defined ethnic groups were created in the colonial period, solely for administrative purposes. Nevertheless, the concept of ethnic groups has a remarkable appeal for political identification and is much

[3] Excerpt from a speech delivered by Julius Nyerere, in Accra on March 6, 1997 (Rasta Live Wire, January 5, 2014).

more of a reality on the ground than the concept of a nation. African states comprise dozens or hundreds of ethnic groups, some of them representing millions of people and larger than many nations.

The difference between an ethnic group and a nation is the relationship to statehood. When one calls an ethnic group a nation, it implies statehood or a claim to statehood. In some places, ethnoculturalism defines a nation. But when ethnic and cultural criteria are not coterminous with the "nation," ethnoculturalism becomes the antithesis of nationhood, which tends to be the case in Africa. Here, ethnoculturalism is the matrix of identity and solidarity as well as the framework of political mobilization, mostly on a smaller scale than that of the postcolonial "nation"-states, that is at the subnational level. In Africa, ethnoculturalism has proved incompatible with the alien nation-state model. The persistent effort over decades to confine ethnic groups to the dictates of nations has undermined effective government in Africa.

Many states in Africa and other parts of the world boast of a national culture of unity in diversity. The use of the word "national" here amounts to little more than rules of conduct and procedures for interaction between different ethnic groups and is limited to the meta-ethnic level. Such forms of multiculturalism or ethnic federalism can be seen as a balance between centripetal forces (shared nationhood) and centrifugal ones (ethnic particularism). In the Horn of Africa, there are many examples of ethnicity that have proved too resilient to be brushed aside in the name of nationalism. Ethnicity is accommodated by letting administrative boundaries run along ethnic or cultural dividing lines. So far, this has not achieved lasting peace. For example, marginality in Ethiopia's southern and western marches is not overcome by giving people the right to develop their own languages and folkloric versions of culture. More needs to be done to achieve peace, such as fairness in resource use and budget allocations. Otherwise, ethnic pluralism does not lead to a plurality of equals, but to ethnic hierarchies.

Our wildest fantasies cannot beat the richness and variety of forms and functions of statehood provided by the historical and ethnographic record. That is why we always have to ask what the functions of a given state are before we can say that it is not functional, or that it has failed. Those who rule states judged to have failed often have no reason to feel they have *failed*. For instance, ruling elite representing minority interests may focus on parts of the economy where wealth can be easily extracted and syphon off enormous riches that are then sent abroad. Statehood and the measure of success and failure have to take these criteria into account. Who is the state, who identifies with the state, with whom does the state identify, and whom are state policies and development meant to benefit? It cannot even be taken for granted that the state has a plan for development, something that is not a traditional state responsibility. As happened in the Horn, vast areas may drop out of state control for long periods of time; others may never have been effectively penetrated by it. This raises the diagnostic question: what allows us to say that there is a state? What are the functions of statehood? Do people need to know that they live in a state in order to qualify as citizens of that state, or for the state to qualify as real?

States like Somalia before its collapse and South Sudan since its independence functioned mainly as recipients and distributors of foreign aid and, in the case of the latter, of petrodollars as well. In South Sudan, "rent" in the form of foreign aid was the main asset

associated with statehood. There was little else in terms of statehood.[4] Policies that were formulated to benefit South Sudan usually had an ulterior goal. Disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) is part of every standard international peacemaking agenda, because it aims to reduce the number of combatants. But in South Sudan it worked as a kind of pension scheme for noncombatants (such as cooks) and for aged or incapacitated soldiers (Sureau 2017). In anticipation of things to come, no political faction dreamt of actually reducing its fighting force.

State failure to manage the political forces that arise from ethnocultural, regional, and socioeconomic differences and the disparities they represent is most obvious in the Horn of Africa. Unlike the rest of the continent, where the colonial geopolitical legacy was accepted as the lesser evil, it was widely rejected in the Horn, unleashing manifold struggles over territory, boundaries, identity, and power that remain unresolved to this day. The many-sided conflict is fought under the banner of nationalism, involving several rival nation-state building projects—Ethiopia, Eritrea, Sudan, South Sudan, Somalia, Somaliland, and Djibouti—working at cross purposes in a zero-sum game. In the process thus far, the map of the region has been revised several times; two states were truncated and one collapsed, ending with a faithful restoration of the colonial map. At present, all the states face challenges to their sovereignty, identity, and territory.

During the entire postcolonial period none of the states in the region have at any time fulfilled the role attributed to the Western prototype. None has exercised effective control over its entire territory, secured its borders, possessed a monopoly over the use and instruments of force, enjoyed legitimacy and loyalty from a majority of its subjects, enforced law and maintained order throughout its domain, or protected the lives and liberty of its subjects. In fact, the state posed the greatest threat to human and political rights.

Palpable failure has not shaken faith in the nation-state model itself among social scientists who have always perceived modernization in Africa as the mirror image of the West. The failure of non-Western societies to adopt the alien model successfully is accounted as proof of persisting backwardness (Rotberg 2003). The fitness of the model itself and the logic of its imposition globally are not in question. Failure is not seen as terminal. First introduced by Gunnar Myrdal (1968) in a comparison of South Asian countries to European countries, state *fragility* is now the operative concept—a condition that can be overcome by adopting policies devised by social scientists who are energetically producing manuals on "how to fix failed states" (Ashraf Ghani and Lockhart 2008). Even total collapse is not terminal: witness the persistent effort to resurrect the defunct Somali Republic, to prevent South Sudan from falling apart, the refusal to recognize breakaway Somaliland, and the sequestration of Eritrea.

Conflict between and within states on the Horn of Africa has provided a substantial opportunity for Western-led peacemaking interventions that have enabled foreign actors to mediate relations among states, to intervene in their internal affairs, to impose economic and political policies of their choosing, and generally to wield regional hegemony. This interference was sanctioned by the concept of the "responsibility to protect" citizens against abuse by the state, endorsed by UN resolution R2P (Responsibility to Protect) in 2006 that entertains the possibility of withdrawal of sovereignty for transgressors. The then President of the UN General Assembly, Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann (2009),[5] said, "a more accurate name

[4] Sureau (2017) cites drawing lists of foreign NGOs as a state function.

[5] Brockmann (2009), "Thematic Dialogue," lecture delivered to UN General Assembly, July 28.

for R2P would be the 'right to intervene,'" and the targets for intervention are invariably enemies of the West.

By holding local actors responsible for conflict, the West absolved itself of responsibility, while at the same time claiming that Africans had no agency, and this justified outside intervention in their internal affairs. These post-Cold War notions were first played out in former Yugoslavia and the First Gulf War, where human rights abuses served to justify US military intervention. Under the guise of a commitment to protect human rights, the US also invaded Somalia. After eighteen of its soldiers were killed, the US withdrew, and it was clear that Africans were not without agency. In Libya, the West used the cover of a Security Council resolution to protect civilians in order to remove the Muammar Gadhafi regime.

State failure is widely considered to pose a security threat to the Western-dominated international state system. External Western powers judge the condition of a particular state and this is sometimes endorsed by the UN. The intervention that follows aims at regime change, though it may not always be achieved. Efforts at a regime change failed in Libya, Somalia, Afghanistan, and Iraq, as well as in the US peacemaking efforts in Sudan and South Sudan. The solution to state failure is always the adoption of Western institutions of governance and a market economy, as in modernization theory.

Since the onset of the Global War on Terror there has been an increasing effort to give peacemaking, conflict prevention, and development a security dimension under the concepts of stabilization and Countering Violent Extremism (CVE). These measures serve to emphasize the security role of African states and to link them closely to the security interests of the West. Stabilization and CVE increasingly blur the line between humanitarian operations, including peacemaking on the one hand, and military operations on the other. They are designed to mobilize Third World states in the latest international crusade undertaken by the West. Military assistance provided for ramshackle states and embattled regimes enables unpopular regimes to cling to power and, more importantly, to shore up crumbling states and salvage the Western model.

Whether it is colonialism, neocolonialism, neoliberalism, the GWOT, or Western-led peacemaking, the West finds new and innovative ways to undermine the sovereignty of African states, create and co-opt local elites, open their economies to Western corporations, gain control of their resources which are used to advance their own interests. While Western countries enjoy the benefits and legitimacy of self-proclaimed democracy, Western policies in Africa over many years have been designed to separate the rulers from the people, make these rulers accountable to the West and not to their own people, and thus limit and shape development and preclude the emergence of indigenous systems of governance and accountability.

Material incentives are the key to understanding politics and conflict in this region, possibly in a clearer and less disguised form here than elsewhere. However, who allies with whom is not merely determined by the price of loyalty. Identifications and alliances are influenced by beliefs and ideologies. Evangelical Americans believed that South Sudan would become an English-speaking, Christian country in the heart of Africa, and Americans of all persuasions thought it would become a democracy following the US model. This notion has little to do with the actual collective identities, languages, and beliefs found in what was to become South Sudan. Slavery in Sudan was an important topic in the discourse of Western supporters of the independence of South Sudan, but it was also a manipulated notion perpetuated by American and European supporters of the Sudan Peoples' Liberation Army

(SPLA) to gain support for the movement and discredit the supposed Arab and Muslim slave owners. This discourse gained considerable support in the US because of its history of slavery and the white guilt associated with slavery. Elsewhere, *terrorist* served as a convenient label for everyone who opposed Western political or economic interests, appealing to fears provoked by events as distant as the 9/11 attacks on the US and the rise of the Islamic State in Syria and Iraq. Ideas about racial inferiority and superiority along with accompanying practices of discrimination also exist among Africans. That is why the pervading factors of neocolonialism and integration into a globalized capitalism at the losing end do not lead to uniform results across the region. If they did, we could stop at this point, but they do not.

The study presented in this book seeks to address the root causes of the Horn of Africa's troubled modern political history. Given the record of state failure to manage conflict in the region as measured against the Western nation-state model, the question raised in this study is whether the Western nation-state model adopted, or claimed to be adopted, in the Horn and generally in Africa is suitable for the time and place. Is the Horn of Africa unique in sub-Saharan Africa with regard to the applicability of the nation-state model? It can be argued that the region's modern history is exceptional, overshadowed in the case of Ethiopia by the dominating presence of an African state with ancient roots that not only avoided the colonial experience, but itself went on to create a genuine empire in the region.

Furthermore, the Ethiopian empire was not dismantled as its European counterparts were, instead its rulers launched a determined, longstanding campaign of national integration intended to turn the multi-ethnic empire into a homogeneous nation-state. This provoked a many-sided conflict with several rival nation building projects in the region that crashed head-on with Ethiopia's, and the result was war across state boundaries, that is over territory—a rarity in the rest of the continent. The policies of Ethiopia's Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed including the military action against the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) at the end of 2020 appear designed to again construct a homogeneous nation-state, a project this study suggests is doomed to failure. It should be noted, however, that the longest conflicts occurred within state boundaries when entire regions—Eritrea, South Sudan, and Somaliland—rebelled against the suffocating embrace of an autocratic state pursuing national integration through cultural assimilation.

Is the experience of this region unique for the continent, or is it an aggravated instance of the pursuit of nation building at all costs? The pursuit of the nation in the embrace of a tightly centralized, autocratic state is the hallmark of Africa's postcolonial history, the dominant force in the politics of the independent states, and the root cause of many evils. Certainly, the Horn is not the only example of the destabilizing impact the attempt to graft a singular national consciousness and identity onto the flourishing ethnic plurality of sub-Saharan Africa has on the fragile postcolonial state. In fact, it can be argued that the refusal to accept social reality and accord it political recognition is the root cause of the prevailing instability. Uganda and Kenya, not to mention Rwanda and Burundi, are cases in point.

1.3 Where to Go from Here

The question that is never raised by social scientists and politicians alike is whether the failure of states in Africa to manage their countries and resolve their peoples' problems might be due, at least to a degree, to the incompatible match of an alien form of governance with African reality. The thought of a mismatch is not entertained because the reigning dogma of

modernization does not recognize the possibility of an alternative form of state. The study presented here aims to revive the debate by questioning whether the Western nation-state is the right model for Africa, and to encourage Africans to consider alternative methods of governance for the continent. *What is alternative?* is the familiar retort that rules out a debate on this issue. Our view is that the answer is for Africans to discover.