Michael Woldemariam, *Insurgent Fragmentation in the Horn of Africa: rebellion and its discontents*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (hb £75 – 978 1 108 42325 0). 2018, vii + 330 pp.

The political histories of Ethiopia and Eritrea with their myriad rebellions have long fascinated researchers interested in armed conflict, but a systematic analysis of the evolution of the region's rebel groups has been lacking. This book takes up this challenge, providing an excellent contribution to research on how rebellions fall apart, and a deep analysis of those movements that shape contemporary politics in both countries.

Michael Woldemariam seeks to understand why rebel groups disintegrate – an important concern, as rebel cohesion and fragmentation can affect the intensity and duration of civil wars. Making use of a quantitative analysis of rebel groups in Ethiopia, as well as detailed histories of the Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF or Jebha) and the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (ELPF or Shaebia), and extending the argument to other armed groups in Ethiopia, Eritrea and Somalia, Woldemariam presents a carefully crafted and meticulous study. The book compares evidence from an impressive range of sources, including archival and original interview data collected during fieldwork in Ethiopia, Somalia, Kenya, Sudan, Europe and North America.

The book's innovation is to refocus attention on the *temporal* dimensions of rebel splits – the changing demands of war over time and how they have an impact on rebels and their organizations. Rebel cohesion and fragmentation have been the focus of much recent research in conflict and security studies, but most arguments have looked at the impact of internal characteristics of armed groups or of their external relations. Woldemariam makes an important adjustment to Fotini Christia's theory (see *Alliance Formation in Civil Wars*, 2012), which explains alliances between rebel groups in multiparty civil wars in terms of wins and losses on the battlefield. While Christia expects battlefield wins to foster cohesion within armed groups and losses to lead to fragmentation, Woldemariam argues that wins can also result in factionalism and fragmentation, as they may trigger a conflict over the distribution of the spoils of war. Cohesion, as the book demonstrates, is a result of military stalemates ('cohesive stalemates'), during which the external threat motivates armed groups to remain together, while not being strong enough to threaten the individual factions' survival.

The theoretical underpinning of the argument is that each rebel organization is made up of factions. Inspired by the neorealist tradition in international relations, Woldemariam maintains that factions are like units in an anarchic system that fight for their own survival. If the survival of individual factions is at stake, then a collapse of the coalition is likely. However, to fully account for the dynamic process of moving from coalition to factionalism and then to fragmentation, we would need to know more about the internal characteristics of factions and their motivation to solve factional conflicts by leaving the coalition. In the author's explanatory framework, the two-step process of factionalism (tensions between factions) and then fragmentation (splits between factions) is collapsed into one. But why, for instance, did certain battlefield gains and losses lead to factionalism, but not to rebel splits (p. 183)?

Like the neorealist perspective that he draws on, Woldemariam tends to overemphasize conflict – and rebel splits. While the book has implications for a theory of the cohesion of armed groups, it prioritizes fragmentation both theoretically and empirically. The mechanisms that drive factions apart when rebels face military gains or losses are well evidenced. However, the process by which stalemates keep factions together remains largely unexplained. The theory points to the role of external threats, which appear to be at an equilibrium during stalemates. But do these external threats remain the same over time? Some stalemates

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are very violent, as the case studies reflect (p. 178), but we do not know what the effect is of that violence. One could imagine that high levels of violence or a long-lasting stalemate would have an effect on the available resources, fighters' morale, and the rebels' vision for what is possible to achieve during the war, which could all have an impact on relationships between different factions. What kind of mechanisms keep rebels together during these periods of stalemates, and what would threaten their cohesive effects?

While the book triggers some additional questions, its main argument is carefully set up and well supported. Noteworthy is how systematically each case study addresses alternative arguments, setting high standards for a careful evaluation of the theory and its implications.

Overall, the book makes an important contribution to conflict and security studies, refocusing the discussion on the dynamics of civil war. It will be invaluable to scholars and students interested in how rebel groups evolve over time, and how politics unfolds in the Horn of Africa.

Corinna Jentzsch
Leiden University
c.jentzsch@fsw.leidenuniv.nl
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Douglas H. Johnson, *South Sudan: a new history for a new nation*. Athens OH: Ohio University Press (pb US$14.95 – 978 0 8214 2242 7). 2016, 224 pp.

With *South Sudan: a new history for a new nation*, Douglas Johnson confirms his position as among the world's leading South Sudan scholars. As part of Ohio University Press's 'Short Histories of Africa' series, Johnson notes at the outset 'the basic contradiction here of attempting to fit a *longue durée* history into a Short History series' (p. 18). In his own words, the book is 'no more than an introduction … offered to stimulate conversation, debate, and further research about South Sudan's past' (p. 28). Johnson succeeds in his task.

The book can be broken down into three sections: introductory foregrounding on the peoples, landscapes and cultures of South Sudan; overviews of the nineteenth- and twentieth-century colonial periods; and the natures and consequences of the two twentieth-century civil wars. One of Johnson's major aims is to delegitimize the assertion that Southern Sudan's history began with Turco-Egyptian period colonialism and that much of its history was spent in relative isolation. He begins this corrective agenda by discussing the ancient peoples of Southern Sudan and the fact that they, far from borrowing Egyptian models, were 'active participants' in exchanges and interactions that travelled up and down the Nile (p. 30). He cites the accounts of Edwards, Fuller and Ehret as recent work suggesting that the Nubian kingdoms of Kerma, Napata and Meroe were examples of Sudanic states rather than mere replications of the Egyptian Pharaonic model. Chapter 2 provides basic foregrounding on Nilo-Saharan populations, and for his overview on Sudanic civilization, Johnson relies on canonical figures in Sudanese anthropology such as Edward Evans-Pritchard, Geoffrey Lienhardt, Wendy James, and his own work. Chapter 3 begins by noting that indigenous accounts must be analysed in order for South Sudan's internal histories to be constructed and notes that recurring themes can be found in Southern material cultures. Johnson provides brief but important information on states and kingdoms, including the Shilluk and Anuak (among others), and states that accounts that are often framed as mythic are used to explain societal origins and processes of integration, differentiation and movement.

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