I have never been to the Horn of Africa but I imagine that, as elsewhere on the continent, most people there live in peace most of the time. For if the levels of violence portrayed in this book were anything like the whole story, one would reasonably expect the entire region to have become a desert by now, which is evidently not the case. With that proviso, I can recommend this book as a concise and remarkably comprehensive survey of the manifold social problems of the Horn, of which war and famine are sadly the most dramatic symptoms. The style throughout is commendably clear and jargon-free: particularly refreshing is the absence of the word 'discourse'.

The various contributors illustrate the complexity of the total picture, giving the reader a sense of the local and particular as well as of the regional and global factors bearing upon the heterogeneous mix of peoples and cultures that make up the human population of the Horn. In a synoptic chapter that would have made an excellent introduction but for some mysterious reason appears at the end of the book, John Markakis shows how nature and history have combined to create a chronically unstable situation. Low rainfall makes pastoralism the...
and unimport ant nations of the area. Three areas that could be affected by such a war