

Implications of cross conflict in North Eastern Kenya

Abstract:

Resource based conflicts is considered to be the single most obstacle to peace and security in North Eastern Kenya. Conflicts in these environments are products of deep seated historical-structural issues such as marginalization, poverty and general under development. The recent new pressures such as the rise of Islamists groups like Alshabab have worsened the communities' susceptibility to armed violence and altered the nature of 'traditional' conflict. This study focuses on the identification and analysis of key conflict actors in the cross borders of Kenya, Ethiopia and Somalia and examines the causes of conflicts in these areas. An extensive study of relevant literature and the implementation of practical research had been undertaken, with the latter carried out through select individual interviews and focus group discussions with representatives from the tri borders of Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia. This research produced a number of key findings. One is that resource based conflicts continue to shape the nature of cross border conflicts. The study also shows that each cross border violence since 2005 has plunged the region into more intractable and dangerous levels of crisis and conflict, adding new layers of grievances, hardening divisions of the communities and fostering radicalization. A coherent and well coordinated cross border peace initiatives and linkages will have the potential to reduce cross border conflicts. The main conclusion drawn from this study is that the need to track new developments is particularly crucial for the tri-border areas where the shifting politics of the Home of Africa frequently alter local dynamics. The implication here is that basic mechanisms - preferably locally based ones - to monitor trends, highlight threats, and issue warnings of any rising conflict situations are critical. The study revealed that strengthening cross border linkages and relations may be the first step towards securing the borders. Active engagement of tri border States in cross border affairs will effectively strengthen cross border peace and stability.