

ISLAM AND POLITICS IN THE HORN OF AFRICA AND BEYOND

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Due to my new role as the director of the Center for Global Islamic Studies, my time to do research has been somewhat limited. Much of my research in 2015 has been devoted to parallel projects, all dealing with religion and politics in the context of Ethiopia. While this is a continuation of my interest in Islam in the Horn of Africa, it has moved in the direction of investigating Islamic reformist views on democracy, secularism and the role of religion in the public. Obviously, this also includes looking at how the state has reacted and acted in relation to this. The major project has been looking at representation of the Muslim Brotherhood in Ethiopia. While the movement has no concrete and formal presence in the country, it is present through individuals and groups of individuals attracted to the Muslim Brotherhood's ideas, becoming crucial for what I have called a "Muslim Politics of Recognition." This research has been carried out through my engagement in the International Law and Policy Institute (Oslo, Norway), and funded by Norwegian Peacebuilding Resource Centre. The

outcome of the project so far been a report and a brief – posted online – while two journal submitted for publication/being in the making. Parallel to this, I have finalized a research project on African Salafism, surveying both common trends and local variations for Salafi movements and groups across the continent. In particular, the focuses here have been on the issue of ritual purity and piety within Salafi religious reform, and what I call "The Politicization or Religious Purity." This project is in relation to my role as a guest editor for a special issue on Salafism in Africa for the journal *Islamic Africa*. Lastly, I have worked on the relationship between religious and ethnic identities in the context of the Horn of Africa. I have through this research project tried to forward new conceptual approaches on how to understand the formation, maintenance, and power of such identities. This will appear as part of the Wiley-Blackwell *Companion to Material Religion* (2015).

In addition to this, I have been actively engaged in policy-advising for entities such as the US Department of State, the US Embassy in Addis Ababa, and the

EU Mission to Ethiopia. I have in 2015 published a report and a brief, a piece for *The Horn of Africa Bulletin*, and a journal article in *Islamic Africa*.

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