

THE SECURITY ISSUES BEHIND THE ETHIOPIAN INTERVENTION IN SOMALIA (2006-2009)

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Introduction

The relations between Ethiopia and Somalia have known turbulent episodes in recent history. The deployment of Ethiopian troops in Somalia in 2006 can be understood as a new phase in their relations, but one with historical roots. It implied a change from the relative peace between the two countries since the end of the Cold War and the start of a conflict dissimilar to previous wars between the two states. It is widely acknowledged that Ethiopian troops have regularly crossed the frontier during peacetime to police the border area, especially to fight armed movements and to secure the Ethiopian state. But this was not something overtly admitted by the Ethiopian government in 2006, until Meles Zenawi openly deployed his troops in Somalia with the tacit support of the international community. Since then, their presence has been virtually constant, though two phases can be discerned: from December 2006 to January 2009, and from November 2011 until the present.¹

This chapter will focus on the securitization process in Ethiopia that permitted the deployment of Ethiopian troops in Somalia between 2006 and 2009, in an attempt to go beyond the traditional understanding of security, with its focus on the military sector and its problem-solving approach. The chapter is not so much about the war as on the securitizing speech acts² on the threat posed by the Union of Islamic Courts (UIC), the securitization of this issue, the political context in which it happened and some of its consequences for Ethiopia. In this regard, this work is partly inspired by Didier Bigo's question related to the task of critical security studies: "Who is doing an (in)securitization move, under what conditions, towards whom, and with what consequences?" (Bigo, 2008: 125). This research draws on critical security studies and international political sociology and following Paul Williams attempts to bring them closer to the English School by analysing the implications of this intervention for the international society. (Williams, 2005) It argues that the Ethiopian intervention has to be understood as the product of a

¹ The Ethiopian Prime Minister Hailemariam Dessalegn stated on 23rd April 2013 that Ethiopian troops would leave Somalia, but other prior announcements of this kind have not come true; cf. *News 24* (2013). In January 2007 the Ethiopian government affirmed that the Ethiopian troops in Somalia would withdraw, an announcement that was welcomed by the United Nations Security Council, but the troops stayed two more years (S/RES/1744 of 21st January 2007).

² Understood as "the act of saying security in relation to an issue"; according to Ole Wæver, if successful, the act itself allows a state-representative to claim "a special right to use whatever means are necessary to block" the security issue (Columba Peoples and Vaughan Williams, 2010: 76-77).

securitization move, and in consequence that it needs to be approached beyond its bilateral manifestation, taking account of a broader context, as much in time as in space.

The argument is divided into three parts. Firstly, I briefly outline the Ethiopian intervention in 2006-2009, and propose new insights to broaden and deepen our understanding of it following the work done by Critical Security Studies. My suggestion is that the analysis of the discourse around the intervention, as reflected in *The Ethiopian Herald* (TEH) — the main official English language newspaper in Ethiopia —, imply that the securitization move of the Ethiopian government regarding the events in Somalia in 2006 and after, helped not only to secure the Ethiopian state but also to reshape the image of the Ethiopian regime and its political project. Secondly, to understand this move it is necessary to enlarge the picture in order to situate this process in a wider context. Questioning the meaning of this intervention as a bilateral issue, I connect it to the local and international context: the aftermath of the Ethiopian elections, and the securitization of Africa, in order to understand the connections of different political agendas. Finally, I briefly consider the consequences of this intervention for Ethiopia and the international society, concluding that the securitization process helped to (re)create the government's local and international authority and legitimacy or at least to reshape the idea of it.

Securitizing Somalia: the 2006-2009 Ethiopian intervention in the country

In October 2004, in the framework of the Eldoret Peace Process, the Transitional Federal Government of Somalia (TFG) was established and Abdillahi Yusuf (a former colonel of the Siyad Barre regime that became the leader of one of the rebel groups that fought against Barre's regime, and one of Somalia's warlords and leader of Puntland) was appointed President of Somalia. This government was known as an ally of Ethiopia (one of its main weaknesses in the eyes of the Somali population), and dependent on foreign support, not only from the US or EU, but Ethiopia as well, as their openly admitted good relationship showed.³

When in 2006 the UIC gained force and presence in the country, especially after June when they succeeded to control Mogadishu, the Ethiopian government transmitted its concern about the unfolding of events. The takeover of the country by the UIC was perceived as a threat to the integrity of the Ethiopian state, among other reasons because of the UIC "Greater Somalia" discourse and their claims on Ethiopian Somali region, a region already troubled by the Ogaden National Liberation Front's (ONLF) demands for independence (Hagmann, 2007); the hosting of the Oromo Liberation front (OLF) by fundamentalist movements in Somalia in order to add another destabilizing factor for Ethiopia; a fear of attacks in other parts of Ethiopia, in reminiscence of the 1996 and 1997 bombings in public buildings such as the Ghion Hotel in Addis Abeba, claimed by Al-Itihad, then led by Sheikh Hassan Dahir Aweys who was one of the

³ TEH (2006), "Meles holds talks with Somali TNG President", January 15th, p. 1; "Somalia reopens embassy in Addis Ababa", April 4th, p. 1; "Ethio-Somalia bilateral ties growing", May 9th, p.1.

leaders of the UIC in 2006; and the Eritrean connection with the UIC and other armed movements, documented in the November 2006 Report by the UN Monitoring Group on Somalia (UN Monitoring Group on Somalia, 2006).

At least since 1997, Ethiopia had been making —although denying it— incursions into Somalia. The consolidation of the UIC in Somalia and the jihad they declared against Ethiopia in July 2006 catalysed the attention of the government, who started a securitization move concerning the conflict in Somalia, and particularly the role of the UIC in it. In this regard, it is possible to identify a shift in *The Ethiopian Herald's* coverage of the issue. Until that month, international information in this newspaper focused primarily on bilateral relations with the countries of the Horn (Eritrea and the role of the UNMEE regarding the border dispute, diplomatic relations with the TFG and Djibouti), other countries such as China, the US and UK and international organizations (EU, IGAD).

At the same time, the support of Ethiopia through international aid also had a prominent place in the newspaper. Overall, those themes presented Ethiopia as a country committed to peace in the Horn of Africa (HoA) and the continent at large through its peacekeeping forces, and with sustained international support visible in its wide diplomatic relations. Simultaneously, other political news presented the Ethiopian regime as committed to democracy, development, growth and the fight against poverty. The questioning of this commitment by foreign actors (or local ones, such as armed movements like the OLF) was presented in the newspaper as an attack on Ethiopia, giving support to the opposition and the Diaspora against the EPRDF, putting at risk the achievement of these purported objectives.⁴ But nevertheless, news tended more to underline the maintenance of international aid to Ethiopia, implying that the government succeeded to obtain this support because of a genuine democratization and development project, and defending that a transition was really happening in the country as shown in the 2005 elections.⁵

Then, after mid-June and particularly July, the information in the newspaper experienced a clear shift. Coverage of the conflict in Somalia started to be much more prominent because of the consolidation of the UIC, challenging the TFG, Ethiopia and the Horn. Two news items, on July 29th —“Lasting peace, stability in Somalia crucial for overall security of the Horn”— and August 12th —“Ethiopia committed to ensuring dependable peace, security in Somalia: MoFA”—, illustrate the securitization move happening around the conflict in Somalia. Securing the TFG was underlined not only as fundamental to protect peace, stability and the rule of law in Somalia, Ethiopia, and East Africa, but as the only option. Besides, it aligned the African Union, the IGAD, the “international community” and Ethiopia behind a common objective, defeating terrorism, combating Al-Itihad and Al-Qaeda and their Eritrean connections in

⁴ TEH (2006), “Who is undemocratic?” and “Withholding aid from an impoverished nation: can it be a solution?”, January 8th, both on p. 3; TEH (2006), “Ana Gomes: we’re back to work, how about you?”, April 2nd, pp. 3-9.

⁵ TEH (2006), “Ethiopia in 2005: the beginning of a transition?”, March 18th, pp. 6-8.

Somalia. Ethiopia was then participating with other international actors in the global war on terror, and portrayed as defending core international values such as order and stability.

But this securitization move through speech acts in this newspaper is especially noticeable since December, when the utterances about security multiplied, depicting the UIC as an existential threat to the Ethiopian sovereignty, expecting the people to gather around the government to stand against this aggression for the survival of the state. Nevertheless, these articles are interesting not only because of how they securitize this issue, but also for what they imply about the way the securitization move happens. Beyond the defence of peace, stability and the rule of law in Somalia, the newspaper's articles affirmed the Ethiopian government's commitment to other principles such as democracy, tolerance and cooperation and portrayed this political project as threatened by the conflict in Somalia.

In this regard, it is possible to consider that this securitization process fits Rita Abrahamsen's description of securitization moves as gradual and incremental, placed on a continuum in which "the normalcy end of the security spectrum approaches the continent largely in terms of development/humanitarianism, whereas the other extreme places it in the context of the 'war on terrorism'." (Abrahamsen, 2005: 59) Playing with this continuum, the Ethiopian government maintains a double discourse, as its commitment to the above-mentioned principles can be questioned by its political practice. While Somalia represents the worst case scenario along this security continuum —being the epitome of the collapsed state concept, Ethiopia successfully presents itself as the hegemon of the region, on which its stability, order and security depend. In addition, as it is the second most populated state in Africa and because of its proximity to the Red Sea and the Bab el Mandeb Detroit —despite not having a direct access to the sea, any regional disorder is perceived by other states as a potential source of concern for international order. Any move aimed at maintaining the *status quo* easily gathers support.

The intervention officially started on 24th December 2006, and was legitimized by the Ethiopian government as an act of self-defence⁶ under international law, following the invitation from the TFG for troops to enter Somalia and combat the UIC. It aligned Ethiopia with other countries in the global war on terror. The main argument for deploying Ethiopian troops was then the protection of the integrity and sovereignty of Ethiopia's territory.⁷ *The Ethiopian Herald* transmitted not only the security concerns expressed by Prime Minister Meles Zenawi, but also by other countries like the US and Canada. A point is worth noting here regarding the Ethiopian-US connection in this intervention.

Although it is frequently said that this intervention was undertaken with the direct sponsorship of the United States, the type of support provided by the US is far from being clear and even recognized by

⁶ THE (2006), "We're not saying we might be attacked. We're saying we've been already attacked – Prime Minister Meles Zenawi", November 28th, pp. 3-10; TEH (2006), "Forced to go to war: Premier", December 26th, pp. 1-9. The Ethiopian troops started to deploy after the UN resolution 1725 (2006) authorising IGASOM; cf. Fanta (2007).

⁷ TEH (2006), "War with UIC extremists: War of defending national sovereignty", December 28th, p. 6; TEH (2006), "Our agenda is to provide adequate protection to our country – Prime Minister Meles Zenawi", December 29th, p. 3.

both parts. This question of the US involvement is not easy to elucidate, as it is neither easy to know how many soldiers were effectively deployed during the different phases of the intervention, nor how many casualties there were.⁸ In fact, the decision process around the issue has been characterized by its secrecy, Parliament being consulted in November/December 2006 just to approve the measure. Although some opposition deputies tried to question the intervention, they had no capacity to impede the resolution, as any questioning of it implied an accusation of betrayal.⁹

The Ethiopian government has claimed it received no foreign support,¹⁰ but at the same time fuelled the ambiguity. *The Ethiopian Herald* showed strong support by the international society towards the decision to intervene in Somalia, while exposing the renewal and increase of foreign aid flows. Nevertheless, although the Ethiopian intervention in Somalia is frequently associated with US sponsorship or direction, no evidence has been made public. This does not mean that the US had no knowledge of the Ethiopian decision to intervene but it seems worth not overstating the American factor in the intervention. As Menkhaus puts it: "Though the Ethiopian offensive was not, as has sometimes been falsely portrayed, an instance of the US subcontracting the war of terror to a regional ally (Ethiopia pursued its own interests and would have acted with or without US approval), the US did provide diplomatic, intelligence, and possibly other support to the Ethiopian government in this operation" (Menkhaus, 2009: 3).

It seems prudent then not to overstate or understate the involvement of the United States. This link isn't clear, for at least two reasons: first, because in military terms, the Ethiopian state is strong enough to bear the costs of the deployment by itself (especially in terms of troops and ammunition) and second, because the United States was not interested in getting closely involved in another war.¹¹ Although the interests of Ethiopia and the United States seemed to converge, it appears that the Americans were aware of the difficult consequences that engaging directly or overtly supporting Ethiopia might have. Consequently, any direct link has been avoided, which does not mean the absence of any connection.¹²

As Awol Kassim Allo has analyzed, the legality of the intervention might be questioned by the doubtful legitimacy of the TFG government itself as the representative of the Somalia state (Allo, 2009). At the same time, confronting the Ethiopian arguments with international law, "although Ethiopia could be seen to be under an imminent threat of attack triggering the right of recourse to a proportionate response,

⁸ As I have been told during the fieldwork, at the beginning 20,000 soldiers were sent to Somalia (14 per cent of the regular troops), and that at the end there were around 6,000. There is no given number of casualties.

⁹ TEH (2006-12-01), "Parliament endorses resolution to reverse Somali Islamists aggression" and "Meles describes stand of some opposition leaders to stay aloof amidst attacks coming from Somalia as historic hitch", both in p. 1.

¹⁰ TEH (2007), "We have never expected any country to back us; neither we asked anyone to do so – P.M. Meles", January 3rd, p. 3.

¹¹ This is what can be seen from the document "Somalia: Expanding Crisis in the Horn of Africa" (US Government, 2006).

¹² It is said that Wikileaks Cables revealed that Ethiopia went to Somalia prompted by the United States. Cf. Axe (2010), Prince (2010), *The Economist* (2008), "A loveless liaison", May 4th, 387 (8574), pp. 51-52. Nevertheless, this does not mean that Ethiopia hadn't its own political reasons and depended exclusively on US instructions.

it certainly went beyond what is necessary to remove the threat and used a disproportionate force" (Allo, 2010: 167).¹³ In this regard, Ethiopia fulfilled the first "felicity condition" necessary, according to Ole Wæver, for a securitization process to be successful. That is, it followed "the conventional 'plot' of securitization" presenting an existential threat as legitimizing "the use of extraordinary measures to combat that threat", the extraordinary measure being the deployment of Ethiopian troops in Somalia, despite doubts about the legitimacy of this intervention (Columba Peoples and Vaughan Williams, 2010: 79).

Furthermore, this conflict also carried historical connotations — the third felicity condition according to Wæver (Columba Peoples and Vaughan Williams, 2010: 79) — likely to contribute to the success of the securitization move. Not only have relations between Somalia and Ethiopia known periods of open conflict, but this move was also related to the recent securitization of Africa as part of the "war on terrorism". In this regard, this new war is one between Ethiopia and a non-state actor and does not reproduce former confrontations, such as the 1964 and 1977-1978 wars.

Even if the operation was officially depicted as an immediate success,¹⁴ the troops remained in Somalia for two years. The principal reason given for prolonging the intervention was the impossibility of ensuring real control of the territory by the TFG and filling the vacuum created by the departure of Ethiopian troops, although apparently Ethiopia was entrapped, not having an exit plan.¹⁵ The two main factors that help to explain the withdrawal of the troops in January 2009 are, on the one hand, the peace process between TFG and UIC that started in 2008, conditioned later on by the end of the Ethiopian presence in Somalia's territory, and on the other hand the creation and slow deployment of the AMISOM "peacekeeping" force.

The securitization of the Somali conflict following the events of 2006, with the Union of Islamic Courts gathering momentum, presents characteristics going beyond the military sector, as the covering of the issue in *The Ethiopian Herald* transmits. According to official discourse, the UIC represented a challenge to the Ethiopian state not only in a material or physical way (that is, the survival and continuity of Ethiopian boundaries and the population inside Ethiopia), but in an ideological way too, affecting the political project of the Ethiopian government. Putting the principle of Ethiopian sovereignty at the centre of the agenda, the speech acts about this conflict, along with other decisions of day-to-day politics, helped to reinforce the idea of an inside/outside dichotomy as Robert B. J. Walker has described it: spatially

¹³ Other researchers have pointed out too that the connections with international terrorist networks were not self-evident, and that as a consequence the importance of the threat might have been overstated; cf. Marchal (2007: 1105).

¹⁴ And even in one week as stated by Meles Zenawi: TEH (2006), "Union of Islamic Courts has simply melted away – Prime Minister Meles Zenawi", December 30th, pp. 3-10; THE (2006), "The Six-Day war. Ethiopia's successful military operation against Somali extremists", December 31st, p. 3. One month after the beginning of the operation, it was said that the Ethiopian troops had begun their withdrawal: THE (2007), "Ethiopian troops begin Somali withdrawal, says ministry", January 24th, p. 1.

¹⁵ "[...] the Ethiopian army then found itself (like Western militaries in Iraq and Afghanistan) in the classic tar-baby dilemma, where every attempt to attack the problem led to its being still more firmly stuck to it." (Clapham, 2009: 190).

differentiating the inside of a political community —Ethiopia— associated with peace and security and with the possibility of betterment, from its outside associated to sempiternal sources of conflict and insecurity. (Walker, 1993) Nevertheless, at this time the Ethiopian regime was not facing only the challenge coming from fundamentalist movements in Somalia, but also political difficulties, particularly following the 2005 elections. At that moment, its capacity to promote liberty, peace, security and betterment in the country was being questioned locally and internationally. In this regard, the second of Wæver's felicity conditions —that the securitizing actor is in a position of authority and has enough social and capital authority— for the success of a securitization move was less evident. The Ethiopian government used the voice of 'security experts' and scholars to give legitimacy to the intervention,¹⁶ as before the intervention it was still the target of criticism regarding its authoritarianism after the 2005 elections.

The (in)security issue incarnated by the UIC has to be understood beyond the moment of exception that led to Ethiopian intervention. Through the way the UIC was portrayed as a threat to Ethiopia, the Ethiopian government was able to reconstruct and reinforce its identity, restate its political project and recover its authority. In this regard, the consequences of the successful securitization of the "external" conflict in Somalia extended to "internal" conflicts as well. But this is something that has to be made apparent, or otherwise security remains focused on the threat, without paying attention to what is being secured.

Looking beyond the moment of exception

Situating speech acts in their broader political context is fundamental if we are to grasp the consequences of this securitization process. As pointed out before, the securitization of Somalia by the Ethiopian government served to state a commitment to principles such as democracy, peace and order and to international law too, at a moment when the government's compliance with that commitment was questioned. Nevertheless, portraying itself as the opposite of Somalia, Ethiopia tended to reassert it and come closer to the international society.¹⁷ Beyond this self-portrait, the implications and consequences of this securitization move cannot be assessed without understanding what is being securitized.

¹⁶ TEH (2006), "Scholar calls on international community to interfere in Somalia" October 8th, p. 7, referring to the former coordinator of the UN Monitoring Group for Somalia and Eritrea, Matthew Bryden; TEH (2006), "Defensive measure appropriate to reverse threat from Somalia's UIC: Scholars", December 12th, p. 1, referring to the Presidents of the Hawassa University and Dilla University; TEH (2006), "Ethiopia can exercise its inherent right to self-defense: Scholar", December 13th, p. 2, referring to the Head of the Department of Law of the New Generation University College; TEH (2006), "Scholar says Ethiopia's support to Somalia not interference", December 26th, p. 10, referring to an "international law instructor with the Ethiopian civil service college".

¹⁷ TEH (2006), "Ethiopia's Somali stance not different from int'l community: Ambassador", November 29th, p. 1, referring to Somalia's Ambassador in Ethiopia.

The Ethiopian elections in 2005 and the “local” context

Most of the works that have tackled the question of the Ethiopian intervention have done so working on the conflict in Somalia. Although some articles have dealt with the Ethiopian intervention by focusing on the Ethiopian government position, pointing to the need “to look back at the context in which the military intervention occurred in order to understand better the Ethiopian strategy” (Fanta, 2007),¹⁸ it is still necessary to deepen and broaden the approach beyond the military, and particularly to understand how it relates to the Ethiopian socio-political context. Furthermore, given the multiple actors involved and the complexity of the scenario, it is necessary to enlarge the understanding from the spatial point of view and broaden the temporal framework to highlight how different political agendas intertwined. As Kjetil Tronvoll has done in his work on the Ethiopian democratization process, highlighting different times and phases instead of focusing exclusively on the electoral process (Tronvoll, 2009), the intervention should be understood not limiting comprehension only to its development from December 2006 to January 2009.

The Ethiopian incursion into Somalia territory started one year and a half after the controversial national and regional elections of May 2005.¹⁹ This electoral process produced a “crisis of governance” that can be related to the “expression of much deeper problems that derive from the inherent contradictions of state creation and maintenance in a perennially violent corner of Africa” (Clapham, 2009: 181). These elections put in question the legitimacy of the government and its state model for some local and international actors. At the same time, the intervention in Somalia was geared to protect this political project threatened by the UIC, but was also questioned by other actors in the Ethiopian political realm.

While the openness of the pre-election period and election day has been recognized—at least in the urban areas—and is visible in the backlash the government experienced from voters, the post-electoral developments showed a high level of authoritarianism.²⁰ The demonstrations that took place in Addis Ababa in June and November 2005, ending in the death of demonstrators shot by police, numerous arrests and the imprisonment of the main opposition politicians (especially of the Coalition for Unity and Democracy – CUD), journalists and social activists, exposed the violence of the Meles Zenawi’s regime and its fear of losing power (Lyons, 2005; Amnesty International, 2006: 4).

The Ethiopian government’s reaction initially constituted a drawback to its legitimacy in the eyes of the main donors in the international society. Nevertheless, if at first they threatened Ethiopia with cutting the aid on which the Ethiopian budget was heavily dependent, as the opposition was asking, this threat did not materialize (Muchie, 2006; Woldemariam, 2005). On the contrary, and as reported in *The Ethiopian*

¹⁸ See also Bamfo (2010).

¹⁹ In the Somali region the elections took place in August due to logistical and infrastructural problems.

²⁰ The European Observation Mission stated that “the high level of participation by the Ethiopian people and the opening of public debate prior to election day marked a significant development towards democracy in Ethiopia”, although as René Lefort has pointed out, this may have been the case mainly in the urban zones but not in the rural areas. Cf. EU Election Observation Mission in Ethiopia (2005: 5) and Lefort, René (2007). For an assessment of Ethiopian authoritarianism shown in the 2005 elections, cf. Abbink (2006).

Herald, embassies finally renewed their support, foreign governments kept funding the main development projects and, as in the case of Spain, even consolidated their relationship by raising their cooperation substantially. The European Union Electoral Observation Mission seems to have said what the European governments did not want to say, thereby avoiding being tied by their statements. This made it possible to maintain a key ally in the global war on terror. (Borchgrevink, 2008: 210-215)

Since 2005 the EPRDF has worked to recover its control over the country, and has done so, as stated above, with a double discourse, committing itself to democratic changes while actually restricting political liberties. The executive has shown strong control of the judiciary system, for example with the imprisonments mentioned, despite the release of most of them in 2007. And as was visible in the 2010 elections, the five years between elections were fatal for the opposition, who failed to maintain their coalition. In addition, during this interval, very restrictive laws were passed, tightening the Ethiopian social and political space: an amendment to the electoral law in 2007, the press law in 2008 and the charities act and antiterrorist law of 2009. These laws restricted the democratic space and civil liberties, increasing fear and suspicion in the Ethiopian population, and allowing more control over the international cooperation. The result has been a more severe state and government.

Nevertheless, the electoral process of 2005 can probably be better understood in the light of the preceding one in 2000 and of the impact on it of the 1998-2000 Ethio-Eritrean war: "The 2005 election thus follows in the same path as the previous ones, as they 'revealed major constraints in Ethiopia's political system, underlining that after the regimes of Emperor Haile Sellassie (1930-74) and the military leader Mengistu (1974-91), centralist authoritarianism is not gone but perhaps is being reinvented in a new form'." (Tronvoll, 2009: 464) As the 2000 elections had been a clear demonstration of the non-democratic nature of the EPRDF regime (Pausewang, Tronvoll and Aalen, 2002), so the 2005 ones were too, and those in 2010 even more. At the same time, maybe it is not too adventurous to say that, as the Ethio-Eritrean war of 2000 was used to awake state nationalism, the intervention in Somalia was also instrumentalized.²¹

The intervention had the effect of reasserting the Ethiopian government on a state level, and particularly in the Somali Regional State. Politics in this region had been a problem for the EPRDF since the end of the Derg, as the ONLF never joined the coalition, defending the absolute secession of the Ogaden. In 2007, the intervention in Somalia melted with the fight between the government and the ONLF, especially when it targeted an oilfield exploited by a Chinese company in April. Additionally, the intervention served to combat the Oromo opposition through the OLF, with bases in Somalia and Kenya, and backed as the ONLF by Eritrea and the UIC. These links between Eritrea, ONLF, OLF and the Somalia conflicts have been acknowledged by the UN Monitoring Group as well.

²¹ TEH (2006), "Peoples of Ethiopia expected to resolutely stand with gov't to safeguard sovereignty: Ministry", December 2nd, p. 1; TEH (2006), "Ethiopians stand shoulder to shoulder when there is a foreign aggression - Hon. Lidetu Ayalew", December 6th, pp. 3-6.

Through an ambiguous federalism, with a constitution that recognises on the paper the right to secede but a government that controls *de facto* all the regions with a network of affiliated regional-ethnic parties, the EPRDF has managed to control the elections through different political parties, as in the Somali region. Especially since 1998 the Somali People's Democratic Party (SPDP) affiliated to EPRDF has been governing the region, and accused by its critics of being an incarnation of the Addis Ababa colonialism in the Ogaden. This interpretation of the inclusion of the Ogaden in Ethiopia has its detractors, but it shows that the construction of the Ethiopian state (as any other) is still going on, and is related to the colonial period, when the expansion of the Ethiopian state and the definition of its present borders took place.²²

The Ethiopian intervention should be addressed bearing in mind this ongoing state-building process, especially as it had different and simultaneous battle fronts, that in addition have existed all the lifetime of the EPRDF regime, especially against Eritrea and armed opposition movements contesting the predominance of Addis Ababa in their regions (ONLF, OLF). All were labelled as "terrorists", but this strategy blurs the different political aims each one of them support and their different trajectories, as well as the political aims and means of the Meles Zenawi's regime in these regions. At the same time, regarding the front against extremists groups in Somalia, and taking into account the two previous Ethio-Somali wars, in 1964 under Haile Selassie and in 1977-1978 during the Derg regime, although the intervention can be understood as the third Ethio-Somalia war, having the border question in common with the two previous wars, this time it was more than a bilateral confrontation. For these reasons, and following Christopher Clapham's understanding of the maintenance of the Meles Zenawi regime (Clapham, 2009), it is important to understand how the local overlaps with the regional and international political realms.

Melting the local, regional and international levels

Buzan and Wæver considered the Horn of Africa one decade ago as a proto regional security complex (Buzan and Wæver, 2003: 241-243). Nevertheless, the multiplicity of actors involved in the Somalia conflict and the diversity of issues at stake in the Ethiopian intervention make us think that the HoA nowadays is actually a regional security complex. The two main reasons given by Buzan and Wæver do not seem sufficient nowadays to question the current intertwinement of security dynamics in the region, even more if we consider the recent independence of South Sudan, a new landlocked country. First, it seems problematic to assume that "the lack of much significant linkage between the Ethiopia-Somalia dynamics on the one side, and the Ethiopia-Sudan ones on the other" imply merely "a chain of localisms without any clearly defined regional pattern of security interdependence" (Buzan and Wæver, 2003: 242). Indeed, although the Sudan-South Sudan-Somalia connection may not be apparent, Ethiopia is a strong

²² For different accounts on what was happening in Somali Region at the moment, cf. Samatar (2004), Hagmann, Khalif (2006), Hagmann (2005).

enough link between those countries to consider their political dynamics as connected. This is particularly noteworthy regarding the regional implication of the natural resource management and the regional dimension of the Ethiopian regime economic projects, especially the construction of pipelines, railroads and the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam. In addition, their environmental impact and effects on other regional states have been a source of tension as well. As a result, the deployment of Ethiopian troops in Somalia, along the Ethio-Eritrean border, and in international missions in Sudan also has to do with the need to maintain regional stability for the development of these projects. (Bach, 2012: 150-152) Additionally, the fact that regional boundaries may not seem clear does not mean there are no regional security connections, as the recent involvement of Kenya in Somalia shows as well. This would point more to the colonial legacy in African politics and ongoing state-building dynamics, with states like Kenya participating in various regional security complexes.

As a result, the regional level of the intervention goes beyond its bilateral appearance. The Union of Islamic Courts was apparently defeated very quickly, but the reason why Ethiopia stayed longer probably is not simply because it had no exit plan (which is something that seems to be accepted by different analysts) or that it was invited to stay longer by the TFG.²³ In Terrence Lyons words: "To Ethiopia, the potential that these threats would increase over time –rather than the ideology of the Islamic Courts, their irredentist claims, or their ties to Al-Qaeda– compelled a response. Ethiopia acted pre-emptively by providing the military might to drive the UIC out of Mogadishu, to end the safe havens offered Ethiopia's enemies, and to bring the TFG to power in the Somali capital." (Lyons, 2009: 174) For the government it was the occasion to realize its own 'local' political agenda and to reassert itself beyond the region.

Internationally, this intervention gave Ethiopia something of vital importance: the opportunity to present itself as the core country in the Horn of Africa rather than a new source of trouble, taking advantage of the political contrast with its two neighbours, Eritrea and Somalia, despite the 2005 elections. This is not to downgrade Ethiopian government concern regarding the consolidation of the UIC. Indeed, Ethiopia tried between June and October 2006 to bring the TFG and UIC to the same table, and negotiate with the UIC, and resorted to the military option when it became clear that they were not reaching any common view. But the way Al-Itihad and Al-Shabaab were depicted as a threat, also helped to reinforce the Meles Zenawi regime at a critical moment.

As a result, at a broader international level, it served to reassert the country as the key to the Horn's order and stability and by extension as a protector of the international order. The justification of the presence of Ethiopian troops in Somalia in terms of international law can be interpreted in this sense. As pointed out above, two arguments were used by Ethiopia to legitimate the presence of its troops in

²³ This was the government's explanation: TEH (2009), "Ethiopia had to defend clear and present danger-triangular enemies", January 31, p. 9.

Somalia: self-defence, and the request by the TFG.²⁴ The government succeeded in using the communicative and legitimizing functions of international law (Onuma, 2003), sending a message to the international society of its compliance with international standards and framework, and appeasing any possible opposition.

This move was highly successful, as neither the African Union nor the UN Security Council condemned Ethiopian intervention in Somalia. This discretionary policy is related in turn to the securitization of Africa. The securitization of Somalia by the Ethiopian regime situated Ethiopia on an equal footing with other states in the global war on terror and helped to legitimize its role in the international society. As Rita Abrahamsen has explained in relation to British foreign policy under Tony Blair, particularly since September 11th, the underdevelopment of Africa was turned into a security issue. The security and development agendas were intertwined, associating underdevelopment with conflict, and Somalia was depicted as the epitome of this connection (Abrahamsen, 2005). Although it could be considered that it had not generated emergency actions, as Abrahamsen pointed out, the Horn was a forerunner of this process. And this appeared to be even more urgent following the participation of Eritreans, Somalians and Ethiopians in the failed London bombings on 21st July 2005.

The intervention in Somalia was indeed an emergency action, possible partly because once again Ethiopia succeeded in managing the terrorist concerns of the international political agenda to its benefit. Nevertheless, beyond any legitimate concern in 2006 regarding the evolution of the conflict in Somalia, this securitization move served also to improve domination of the Ethiopian society by the Meles Zenawi government. The securitization of Somalia helped to legitimize Ethiopian engagement in the country, and was complemented by justification from international law. But just as New Labour's securitization of Africa "can be seen as a powerful political strategy that shapes and maintains the unity of [the] political community" (Abrahamsen, 2005: 68), for Ethiopia this securitization move served in a similar vein, at the level of both Ethiopian society and the international society. Foreign aid kept flowing towards Ethiopia²⁵, and Meles Zenawi managed not only to maintain but even to strengthen its international presence, as his participation in main international forums such as G8 Summits or The Commission for Africa demonstrates.

Interpreting the securitization and its consequences

Ethiopia's securitizing speech acts about the conflict in Somalia were fundamental to legitimize the adoption of an exceptional political measure like its intervention. Nevertheless, situating this conflict in a wider context, both temporarily and spatially, allows us to connect the securitization move with other political agendas at local, regional and international levels. Statements like the ones in *The Ethiopian*

²⁴ TEH (2006), "Ethiopia can exercise its inherent right to self-defense: Scholar" December 13th; TEH (2006), "TFG appeals for help to fight fundamentalism, terror", December 16th.

²⁵ In 2006 Ethiopia received 1,9 billion dollars per year that represented 25 per cent of the GNP; cf. Lefort (2006).

Herald contributed to the construction of a contradictory “regime of truth” that simultaneously reproduces and questions the commitment to ethical and legal principles such as democracy and human rights. This double discourse has clear implications for Ethiopian society, and at the same time it is not unique to the Ethiopian government as it is also a feature of the international society.

Discourses need to be understood as producing socio-political relations, while the accompanying practices contribute to the creation of identities (Foucault, 2007; Fournier, 2012: 24) In this vein, in Ethiopia this securitization discourse and the subsequent intervention had an effect on power relations and shaped the socio-political landscape. They helped to portray the state and government as committed to democracy, humanitarianism, peace, order and collective security. Through statements on the conflict, the political opposition was questioned and depicted as a source of disorder, while the identity of Ethiopia was built as a unified nation rallied under and defended by the TPLF/EPRDF since the fall of the Derg.²⁶

These utterances are nevertheless problematic, particularly their contribution to silence. It is evident that since 2005 there has been no progress regarding the democratic space in Ethiopia. On the contrary, different laws were passed that contributed to close the political scene even more and especially to resist external questioning of this closure, in order to ensure a greater capacity for manoeuvre for the government. Indeed, the Ethiopian regime has consolidated its position in the international arena despite the fact that the elections in 2010 and 2013 fell short of being democratic. In practice then, the TPLF/EPRDF performs an identity that questions the veracity of its commitment to democracy and by extension any international agenda related to it. While it adapts its discourse to the international political *zeitgeist* and utilise its vocabulary to gain international legitimacy and support, at the same time it resists some of those principles, undermining their meaning and questioning their legitimacy as international principles.

Beyond that, just as “It may be instructive to understand the ‘new terrorism’ as part of the ‘unfinished revolt against the West’” (Devetak, 2005: 242-243), the Ethiopian securitization of Somalia can be interpreted likewise pointing to an unfinished construction of the international society. Behind the appearance created through speech acts, the intervention has challenged international principles and rules such as freedom, democracy and human rights, and questioned through it the global distribution of power. Neither more nor less tacit support for this intervention coming from other members of the international society has contributed to the consolidation of those principles. The resurgence of terrorism as much as the responses given to it have contributed to challenge their implementation (Hurrell, 2007: 162-164)

²⁶ TEH (2007), “Opposition needs to redress its mistakes on Somalia issue”, January 5th, p. 3; TEH (2007), “EPRDF has addressed the challenge on the road to peace, democracy and development effectively – Tefera Walwa, Minister of Capacity Building”, May 29th, p. 3.

This political landscape reflects that the Ethiopian state is, as any other, a work in progress, just as the international society is. What is problematic is that the consequences of those political issues, articulated through the issues of security and order within the society of states, as much in Ethiopia as in other states, are detrimental to the life of individuals and societies in these states, and how states may produce human wrongs. In this regard, critical security studies can be extended beyond Europe. The securitization of Africa can be seen as problematic as it has not contributed to tackling structural and long term troubles (Abrahamsen, 2006). Similarly, the securitization of Somalia has reinforced illiberal practices in Ethiopia. This is not to deny the problem that fundamentalisms pose but to reassert the problem of the manner in which it is addressed, as it fuels local and international inequalities. This kind of order might not be positive for any common social existence.

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