

**THE ETHIOPIAN-ERITREAN DYNAMIC:  
CLASSIC PROXY WARFARE AND HOW A SMALL TOWN IS  
DESTABILIZING THE HORN OF AFRICA.**

Master of Arts in Law and Diplomacy Thesis

**Submitted by Omar Syed Mahmood**

March 31, 2011

# Contents

<b>Executive Summary</b> .....	4
<b>Key Findings</b> .....	5
<b>Map of the Horn of Africa</b> .....	8
<b>List of Acronyms and Movements</b> .....	9
<b>Introduction</b> .....	10
 <b>Section I – Starting Points</b>	
Importance.....	11
 <b>Section II – A Historical Background</b>	
A Distinct Eritrea?.....	15
Post-Independence Relations .....	20
The Outbreak of War.....	22
Enter the United Nations .....	25
EEBC Ruling.....	26
No War, No Peace .....	30
 <b>Section III – War By Proxy</b>	
Proxy Warfare .....	35
 <b>Section IV – Ethiopian Interests</b>	
Concerns Regarding Somalia .....	42
 <b>Section V – Four Phases of Proxy Warfare</b>	
Entanglements in Somalia (Phase I).....	49
Invasion and Occupation (Phase II) .....	56
Withdrawal (Phase III) .....	60
Drawdown (Phase IV).....	63
 <b>Section VI – Contemporary Relations</b>	
Ethiopian Policy .....	69

Continued Stalemate..... 70

**Section VII – Conclusion**

Why Proxies? ..... 72  
Back to the Border..... 76  
Ways Forward ..... 78

**Works Cited** ..... 85

## Executive Summary

---

The inability to resolve wartime objectives through the institutional arrangements created by the Algiers peace accords has left the border between Ethiopia and Eritrea, and specifically the town of Badme, in limbo. However, neither nation is prepared for a return to conventional warfare. Eritrea is too weak militarily to alter the situation, while Ethiopia currently occupies Badme and retains good standing within the international community. The resulting condition of 'no war, no peace' has led to policies of indirect confrontation away from the disputed border, destabilizing the entire Horn of Africa region in turn, through the course of this violent competition.

These indirect confrontations have settled mostly around Somalia, as Ethiopia enjoys a number of core security interests that Eritrea has sought to exploit. Ethiopia seeks to eliminate movements in Somalia that provide safe haven for anti-Addis Ababa organizations, carry out terrorist attacks, and have designs on its ethnically Somali inhabited region of Ogaden. Ethiopia wishes to see dependable, but pliant central government rule, and thus has been propping up the Transitional Federal Government (TFG). Eritrea on the other hand has purveyed significant assistance to radical Islamist groups opposed to the TFG, mostly in the form of Hizbul Islam, and to a lesser degree Al-Shabaab. This is the crux of the past decade's war by proxy in Somalia, which has proved highly damaging to the entire region.

Uniquely, the avoidance of direct confrontation produced a classic Cold War style proxy war, similar to U.S.-USSR indirect confrontations on distant third party battlefields. Proxy war however has evolved in the new security paradigm to predominately take place within the nations in conflict, making the chaos in Somalia an exception to the rule. The proxy war between Ethiopia and Eritrea underwent four iterations, two of which conformed to the classic model; from the late 1990's until 2006, and again from January to December 2009. The Ethiopian invasion and occupation from December 2006 until early 2009 made it a direct participant to the conflict, causing the proxy war to become a one sided affair. Since December 2009 though, the conflict has been in decline, marked by Ethiopia's withdrawal and Eritrea's subsequent drawdown.

Eritrea's drawdown has occurred for a number of reasons, including the imposition of U.N. sanctions, the decline of Hizbul Islam, the lack of influence over Al-Shabaab, and incompatible long term goals. Yet the reduction of machinations in Somalia neither represents an improvement in relations nor a change in tactics, but rather that the stakes for continued Eritrean involvement in this arena have become too high. Despite not accomplishing long term objectives, proxy war will continue to be a policy option of choice because it provides an effective, low-cost measure to pursue short term gains.

The participation in Somalia was a direct result of unresolved matters between Ethiopia and Eritrea. Dialogue needs to begin involving a range of issues beyond the border itself. Possible avenues of negotiation revolve around Ethiopian port access and improving mutually beneficial economic relations. A climate of trust can be constructed through interdependence, leaving emotional security issues for later discussion. Yet Eritrea remains a thorn in the side of the international community, and the failure of renewed, equitable efforts will leave little option but a commitment to long term regime change in Asmara, for the sake of seeking peace within the Horn of Africa.

## Key Findings

This paper explores the relationship between Ethiopia and Eritrea, and how that manifested itself into a classic proxy war in Somalia for much of the past decade. It finds that:

- The history of Eritrea is a history of larger powers deciding the nation's sovereignty. For that reason, Eritrea has gone to significant lengths to guard symbols of its independence, particularly through the use of military force to secure undefined borders.
- The ruling parties in Eritrea and Ethiopia have a long, complex, and intertwined relationship. However, the decline from friendship to intense rivalry was quick and dramatic, marked by the lack of interstate institutional links.
- The 1998-2000 border war was precipitated by economic disagreement. In particular, the introduction of a new currency by Eritrea proved to be a critical breaking point in a climate of increasing tension. Eritrea was the aggressor in the war, but gains were short lived as Ethiopia prevailed militarily.
- The UNMEE mission separated the parties to allow space for a peace to develop, but the lack of pressure on Ethiopia to implement the EEBC ruling resulted in the failure of that mission, underlining the current conflict today.
- A state of 'no war, no peace' has set in because Eritrea is unable to alter the situation militarily, while Ethiopia occupies the contentious town of Badme and has no reason to be the initial instigator in any new war.
  - Both nations also uphold the status quo for various advantages in the domestic arena. Eritrea engages in repression, and Ethiopia appeals to certain hardline elements.
- Ethiopia has a number of security interests in Somalia, which it views an Islamic regime in Mogadishu would violate. Chief among these are fears of a 'Greater Somalia' pursuing Ogaden, terrorist acts in Ethiopia itself, safe haven for anti-Addis Abba movements, and worries of radicalization of its Muslim population. These interests drove Ethiopia's 2006 march to Mogadishu, and are concerns Eritrea has sought to exploit.
  - Ethiopia does not strive to maintain anarchy in Somalia, but if the choice is between extremist Islamic central rule and chaos, it will choose the later. Ethiopia maintains a veto by force over governments in Somalia, and wishes to see central rule that is somewhat weak and receptive to its interests, hence their support for the TFG.
- Proxy warfare was a common tool during the Cold War. Its usage has continued in the new security paradigm, but with significant evolution.

- Classic proxy war, that occurring between the United States and Soviet Union during the Cold War, is taken to mean two nations indirectly confronting each other in a third country battle space.
- In the new security paradigm proxy war has shifted to become a more localized tactic utilized by less wealthy patrons. It also typically does not occur in a third party space, but more often within the opposing nations themselves.
- The motivations behind this tactic are many, but essentially it is an easy, low-cost option for nations to pursue their regional interests.
- Proxy war in Somalia went through four significant iterations, two of which conformed to the classic model.
  - Phase I spanned from the late 1990's until 2006, and was marked by both Ethiopia and Eritrea supporting opposing forces through the provision of arms and training. This was a classic proxy war on a third party battlefield, fought by nations unwilling to directly confront each other.
  - Phase II began with the December 2006 Ethiopian invasion until its January 2009 withdrawal. This was a one sided proxy affair, as Ethiopia was occupying the nation while Eritrea stepped up support in hopes of bleeding Ethiopia dry.
  - Phase III lasted from January 2009 until December 2009, and saw a return to Phase I dynamics. Ethiopia continued support to the TFG, and Eritrea funneled assistance to Hizbul Islam, and to a lesser extent Al-Shabaab.
  - Phase IV began with the imposition of U.N. sanctions on Eritrea in December 2009 and continues to this day. This stage has seen Eritrea significantly reduce its presence from Somalia, while Ethiopia continues to be involved in pursuit of its interests. This phase marks the end of the proxy war in the current context.
- The reasons for Eritrea's drawdown go beyond the sanctions imposed, but also involve the decline of Hizbul Islam, the lack of influence over Al-Shabaab, incompatible long-term goals, and the desire to avoid being linked to the international Islamic terrorism movement.
- The merger of Hizbul Islam and Al-Shabaab was more an absorption of the former movement by the latter, and signaled a decline in the status of Eritrea's main recipient (Hassan Aweys).
- Current Ethiopian policy includes providing assistance to clans along its border to secure a buffer zone, backing the TFG and ASWJ, and an intense counterinsurgency operation in Ogaden. Ethiopian troops routinely cross into Somalia in pursuit of Al-Shabaab militants, often in joint operation with AMISOM, the TFG, or ASWJ.
- The drawdown in the proxy war does not imply an upswing in Ethiopian-Eritrean relations, but more that competition in Somalia has become too costly for Eritrea. It does not signal a change

in policy or tactics by either government, but the resumption of war is unlikely in the near future.

- Neither nation achieved long-term goals in Somalia via proxies, but continued use of the tactic because it helped bring about short-term gains, was an easy means of affecting regional dynamics, and, for Eritrea, was a low-cost measure to make Ethiopia feel insecure.
- The proxy war in Somalia occurred because international efforts to resolve the Ethiopian-Eritrean border failed. Without addressing that dynamic, the Horn of Africa is bound to remain subject to destabilization by either country through their regional competition.
- The international community must make a renewed effort to reconcile Ethiopian-Eritrean relations. Discussions between the two nations need to begin. Opening concerns should include Ethiopian access to Assab, the provisional lifting of Eritrean sanctions, Ethiopian acceptance of the border decision and Eritrean independence, and Eritrean acknowledgement of the need to address Ethiopian concerns in order to implement the EEBC decision.
- Economic interdependence can and should be developed in the short run, to build convivial ties in the run up to any border agreement. Both nations will meaningfully benefit from a resumption of open economic ties, and without addressing underlying issues any gains in peace from an agreement over the border will be short lived.
- Other goals to achieve security in the Horn of Africa include the introduction of democracy to either nation, a regional security initiative founded on the principle of non-interference, and the strengthening of institutional links, specifically with a robust regional organization to settle disputes prior to resorting to war.
- Given Isaias Afewerki's historically belligerent stance towards the international community, if renewed initiatives fail because of his intransigence, then there will be no other hope short of regime change in Eritrea to achieve stable, peaceful relations between the two nations.





## **List of Acronyms and Movements**

AIAI - Al-Itihaad al-Islamiya

AMISOM - African Union Mission in Somalia

ARPCT - Alliance for the Restoration of Peace and Counter-terrorism

ARS - Alliance for the Restoration of Somalia

ASWJ - Ahlu Sunna Wal Jama'a

AU – African Union

AS – Al-Shabaab

EEBC - Eritrea-Ethiopia Boundary Commission

EIJ - Eritrean Islamic Jihad

EPLF - Eritrean People's Liberation Front

EPRDF - Ethiopia's People Revolutionary Democratic Front

HI – Hizbul Islam

ICU – Islamic Courts Union

OLF - Oromo Liberation Front

ONLF - Ogaden National Liberation Front

PFDJ - People's Front for Democracy and Justice

SRRC - Somalia Reconciliation and Restoration Council

TFG – Transitional Federal Government

TNG - Transitional National Government

TPLF - Tigray People's Liberation Front

UNMEE - United Nations Mission to Ethiopia and Eritrea

Since the conclusion of their 1998-2000 border war, a small town call Badme has become a major source of contention between the neighboring countries of Ethiopia and Eritrea, destabilizing the entire Horn of Africa in turn. The standing of the town remains in limbo; legally it is part of Eritrean territory, but Ethiopia continues to administer it. The unsettled status of Badme has precluded the possibility of any reconciliation in Ethiopian-Eritrean relations, and the frustration to bring the issue to a resolution has led both nations, particularly Eritrea, to define their foreign policy with this objective in mind. Having failed by using traditional means of force, Eritrea has resorted to other tools of statecraft, namely war by proxy, to confront its nemesis. This has led to deep involvement by both nations in the inner workings of Somali politics, and to the birth of one of the last true Cold War-style proxy battles. The chaos of Somalia has been ongoing since at least 1991, but the introduction of Ethiopian and Eritrean relations into the mix further destabilized an already violent situation. That example demonstrates just how important the relationship between neighbors Ethiopia and Eritrea is for the stability of the entire Horn of Africa. This paper will argue that without addressing that crucial relationship, which accordingly means eventually arriving at some sort of demarcation agreement over the border, international efforts to achieve stability and security in Somalia, and the wider Horn of Africa in general, will be stymied.

The first two sections of this paper will discuss the importance of the situation before outlining how the two former allies descended into deadly warfare over a seemingly nonessential border town, and onto the current situation of 'no war, no peace.' Following will be a discussion onto the styles and merits of proxy war, with emphasis on how the tactic has shifted from the Cold War to the contemporary security paradigm. The fourth section will outline Ethiopia's interests in Somalia, and how Eritrea has been systematically exploiting them. The ensuring segment will break down Ethiopian and Eritrean involvement in Somalia since 1998 into four periods, with a specific focus on events from 1998 to 2006 as a representation one of the last true Cold War-style proxy battles. The final sections

will analyze the apparent end of the Somali proxy war, what it means for stability in the Horn of Africa, and conclude with some recommendations to mend the fractured, yet central Ethiopian-Eritrean dynamic.

## SECTION I – STARTING POINTS

### Importance

---

In order to discuss the de-stabilizing forces in the Horn of Africa, the geography of the area must first be clearly defined. This paper recognizes the countries of Ethiopia, Eritrea, Djibouti, and Somalia as comprising the region traditionally known as the Horn of Africa. While that is the main geographic focus, events in these four nations affect a much wider range of countries. The extended Horn of Africa would be taken to mean those nations that are also involved in events of the Horn, and in turn are affected by what goes on there, albeit not as decisively. This more loosely employed working definition expands to include Sudan, Uganda, Kenya, and Yemen among others, and displays the enhanced area of reverberations regarding issues between Ethiopia and Eritrea. The disorder in Somalia also attracts an array of global actors, such as the African Union, United Nations, and United States, whose policies in the region are also affected by this dynamic.

The United States was involved in Somalia in the early 1990's, in the wake of dictator's Siad Barre's exodus and the collapse of what remained of the central state. Nonetheless, spurred on by the Black Hawk Down incident in which eighteen United States military servicemen perished in Mogadishu, what little public appetite that had existed for involvement in the areas of state failure, peacekeeping, and state building, quickly vanished.<sup>1</sup> The lack of movement during the genocide in Rwanda in 1994 is

---

<sup>1</sup> Ploch, *Africa Command: U.S. Strategic Interests and the Role of the U.S. Military in Africa*, 33.

often cited as a clear example of this quiescence.<sup>2</sup> However, the events of September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001 heralded a momentous shift in American foreign policy. The Al-Qaeda directed terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center towers and the Pentagon emanated out of the chaotic failure of central governance in Afghanistan and the imposition of Taliban rule. A direct link was made between failed or failing states and the sanctuaries sought by global terrorist movements. Thus state failure reemerged in importance as a crucial component of the Global War on Terror, in the beginnings of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The focus on the failed state-terrorism nexus turned to Africa, a continent filled with politically unstable and poverty-stricken nations. The growing concern was evidenced by statements and actions from high-ranking political and military figures. In 2003, Air Force General Jeffrey Kohler said “What we don’t want to see in Africa is another Afghanistan, a cancer growing in the middle of nowhere.”<sup>3</sup> Former Clinton administration Assistant Secretary for Africa, Susan Rice, told Congress shortly after the 9/11 attacks, that “Africa is unfortunately the world’s soft underbelly for global terrorism.”<sup>4</sup> The establishment of a U.S. Command for Africa (AFRICOM) in October 2008, which took over as coordinator of Department of Defense activities from the United States European Command (EUCOM), is a reflection of the increased strategic importance attributed to the African continent.<sup>5</sup>

Somalia had been the subject of terrorism worries previously, and now, as the quintessential failed state, it reappeared on the global policy-making map. Somalia, however failed and imbedded with Islamic extremism it was, is only one part of the Horn of Africa. Ethiopia and Eritrea inconclusively ended an archaic interstate war just a year prior to 9/11. Their fight was an increasing anomaly in a newly reconfigured post Cold War security paradigm focused on non-state actors and intrastate warfare. These two events, state failure in Somalia and the war between Ethiopia and Eritrea, combined to create

---

<sup>2</sup> “No Illusions.”

<sup>3</sup> Mills, “Africa’s New Strategic Significance,” 159.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 162.

<sup>5</sup> Ploch, *Africa Command: U.S. Strategic Interests and the Role of the U.S. Military in Africa*, 15.

an intractable situation of violence in the past decade, perpetuating the cycle of conflict in Somalia while hindering the normalization of relations between Ethiopia and Eritrea. Such dynamics propagate the sort of instability throughout the Horn of Africa that some analysts fear terrorist groups might be able to prey on.

The fear has merit, as the threat of Islamic extremism has been felt in all three nations.<sup>6</sup> Eritrea claims to be the first nation to have fought the re-configured global jihadist movement, through their struggles with the Eritrean Islamic Jihad (EIJ) in the mid nineties.<sup>7</sup> Ethiopia suffered a wave of terrorist attacks in 1995-96 on its two largest cities, emanating from a jihadist organization across the border in Somalia. Somalia, since the 1990's, has hosted multiple incarnations of the same fundamentalist elements, with ties to global networks. The threat of a Somali government dominated by Al-Shabaab, a radical Islamic youth movement, is very real today, evoking chilling memories of the Taliban in Afghanistan during the late 1990's. The status of the government of Sudan as an United States designated state sponsor of terrorism, Yemen's struggles with Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, the U.S. embassy bombings in Kenya and Tanzania in 1998, and the Kampala World Cup bombing during the summer of 2010, have all been documented elsewhere and do not necessitate detail here, but demonstrate the importance of the wider Horn of Africa region to the global war on terror and the geographically extensive ramifications of events in Somalia.

In the decade since the 9/11 attacks, Ethiopia has been the most successful in maintaining internal stability. At the same time though, the nation suffers from at least two significant ethnic based separatist movements that have at times collaborated with armed groups in Somalia. In addition,

---

<sup>6</sup> Djibouti, with its relatively small population and U.S. and French military presence has largely been spared thus far, but lingering discontent and dire social conditions give worry to the future of the tiny, but strategic state.

<sup>7</sup> Lyons, "Ethiopia's Convergence of Crises," 160.

elections results in 2005 were met with a violent backlash and considered to be thoroughly rigged.<sup>8</sup> The threat to Prime Minister Meles Zenawi's governing Ethiopia's People Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) coalition was so strong that Zenawi spent the next five years pursuing a course of systematic repression to ensure a repeat performance did not occur in 2010. It did not, but his image as a democrat, and Ethiopia's as a nation emerging from persistent conflict to a cycle of good governance, was thoroughly tarnished.

Eritrea on the other hand, has unambiguously stagnated since it proudly achieved independence in 1993, and has substantially declined since its 1998-2000 border war with Ethiopia. President Isaias Afewerki and his ruling People's Front for Democracy and Justice (PFDJ, the political successor to the Eritrean People's Liberation Front [EPLF] independence movement) have consistently driven the nation into isolation from the international community and simultaneously stifled internal debate and freedoms. Taking into account that its economy is faltering, the International Crisis Group warned in late 2010 that without significant attention the nation is in very real danger of becoming the next failed state in the region.<sup>9</sup>

Somalia is well known for not having enjoyed the luxury of central government rule since 1991. The past decade has seen international efforts coalesce around the Transitional Federal Government (TFG), even though that initiative has been marked by incompetent and ineffectual administration. That government is currently limited to control of a just few city blocks in Mogadishu, and protected from encroaching Islamic militants solely by the understaffed, but valiant African Union Mission to Somalia (AMISOM). Recently, the efforts of pirates off the coast of Puntland have drawn much attention to Somalia and exemplify another outgrowth of failed land-based policies.

---

<sup>8</sup> Nega, "Ethiopia is Headed for Chaos," 189.

<sup>9</sup> "Eritrea 'may become failed state'."

Ethiopia, Eritrea, and Somalia face serious security dangers that are intertwined throughout the Horn of Africa. Events in one nation affect outcomes in the others. The distinct possibility of failure in each nation presents an entire region wholly unique to the world in terms of its lack of effective governance, recent history of conflict, strategic positioning alongside Middle Eastern shipping lanes, and the rise of Islamic terrorism. That is why, in the post 9/11 view of global affairs, the Horn of Africa should occupy a top position in terms of international concerns. The threat of state failure and Islamic extremism combine to make the Horn of Africa a serious international security risk. Efforts to improve security in the region must address the Ethiopian-Eritrean relationship, as it is a crucial dynamic fostering insecurity beyond the contested border to the wider region, as events in Somalia the past decade demonstrate.

## **SECTION II – A HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

### **A Distinct Eritrea?**

---

In order to fully comprehend the antagonistic relationship between Ethiopia and Eritrea today, it is necessary to undertake an account of their deeply entangled history. The themes of the past continue to define relations and thought patterns today, explaining current positions and attitudes. While that history is profound and complex, an overview will be made here with reference to the most pertinent events that shape the contemporary situation.

To begin, the Ethiopian-Eritrean relationship is confounded by the fact that the ruling party in each nation derives from previously neighboring rebel groups that, at one time, were so similar that outsiders had difficulty distinguishing between them.<sup>10</sup> An additional complicating factor is that the

---

<sup>10</sup> Lata, "The Ethiopian-Eritrea war," 373.

native Tigrinya speakers, who make up 96% of the Tigray province in Ethiopia,<sup>11</sup> also comprise 55% of Eritrea's population,<sup>12</sup> and encompass much of the ruling class in both countries. Furthermore, the nations were economically interwoven in the post-independence period, with two out of every three Eritrean exports destined for Ethiopia<sup>13</sup> and landlocked Ethiopia dependent on the Eritrean port of Assab.<sup>14</sup> These natural historic, demographic, and economic links straddling the border complicate the current state of affairs, and make the intense animosity exhibited in the past fourteen years seem rather puzzling at first glance.

In the pre-colonial era, the notion of an Eritrean identity did not exist.<sup>15</sup> However, the introduction of Italian colonialism altered this situation. Through a series of treaties in 1900, 1902, and 1908 with Menelik II, then emperor of Ethiopia, the Italians were able to establish a foothold in the Horn of Africa.<sup>16</sup> Their advances towards the center of the Ethiopian empire had been thwarted, but in an attempt to whet the Italian colonial appetite, Emperor Menelik II gave up claims to the northern lands in exchange for recognition of his empire.<sup>17</sup> Thus, taken from history, the beginnings of Eritrea derive from an unwillingness of Ethiopia to maintain this swath of territory, a point not lost on many architects of Eritrean identity today.<sup>18</sup>

For the Eritreans, the Italian colonial period instigated a massive rupture that permanently altered their compatibility with the rest of Ethiopia. Ethiopians though, view these developments as an aberration, brought on by encroaching security threats from more powerful European empires. In any case, the colonial period did provide for a separate experience, and marks the beginnings of the Eritrean

---

<sup>11</sup> *Summary and Statistical Report of the 2007 Population and Housing Census*, 87.

<sup>12</sup> "CIA - The World Factbook."

<sup>13</sup> Henze, *Eritrea's War*, 273.

<sup>14</sup> *Eritrea: The Siege State*, 5.

<sup>15</sup> Gilkes, "National Identity and Historical Mythology in Eritrea and Somaliland," 164.

<sup>16</sup> Kidane Mengisteab, *Anatomy of the African Tragedy*, 231-2.

<sup>17</sup> Henze, *Eritrea's War*, 215.

<sup>18</sup> Zegeye and Tegegn, "The Post-war Border Dispute between Ethiopia and Eritrea," 255.



state. Some of the technological advances brought on by colonialism, specifically with regards to industrialization, increased the overall wealth and status of the Eritrean colony vis-à-vis their former Ethiopian counterparts.<sup>19</sup> This led to a proliferation of attitudes held by many Eritreans that they were more 'advanced,' than the 'backwards' Ethiopians.<sup>20</sup> Such attitudes contributed to the emerging fissures, and were used as evidence by aspiring Eritrean nationalists to their right of self-determination in the post-colonial era.

Had Eritrea been colonized by a European power other than Italy its independence most likely would not have been a source of debate. However, in the wake of WWII and increasing nationalism across the African continent, Eritrea was treated differently given the fact that its colonial occupier had been on the losing side of the Great War. After Italy's defeat and the stripping of its African colonies, the British were given a League of Nations mandate over Eritrea, before a final decision could be made. A discussion took place amongst the great powers and within the colony alike over the genuine changes undergone by Eritreans in their brief colonial experience, and whether that impeded the ability to reattach the colony to its traditional 'motherland.'<sup>21</sup> Eventually, the interests of the major powers (the United States, France, and Great Britain) won out over the desire and expectation for independence held by many Eritreans. Eritrea was awarded to Ethiopia as part of a federation agreement, though with considerable autonomy in 1952, while the Americans in turn, received a military base in Asmara on the coast of the Red Sea's strategic shipping lanes,<sup>22</sup> which proved to be fundamental to U.S. Cold War communications systems.<sup>23</sup> In fact the Kagnew spy station located in Asmara was so important to the United States that Admiral William Leahy stated in 1948 that "the benefits now resulting from operation of our telecommunications center at Asmara . . . can be obtained from no other location in the entire

---

<sup>19</sup> Negash, *Brothers at War*, 8.

<sup>20</sup> Abbink, "Briefing: The Eritrean-Ethiopian Border Dispute," 557.

<sup>21</sup> Negash, *Brothers at War*, 9.

<sup>22</sup> *Eritrea: The Siege State*, 3.

<sup>23</sup> Henze, *Eritrea's War*, 244.

Middle East-Mediterranean area . . . therefore United States rights in Eritrea should not be compromised.<sup>24</sup> To that effect a year after federation, the U.S. received a 25 year lease on its listening post.<sup>25</sup> Great powers had pursued their interests to the detriment of Eritrean sovereignty, setting off a pattern of international community distrust and a paranoid world outlook that persists in the nation to this day.

To further add to that distrust, Emperor Haile Selassie spent the next decade consistently undermining the conditions of Eritrean autonomy until the entire federation was annulled in 1962. Eritrea officially became the 14<sup>th</sup> province of Ethiopia, with any vestiges of independence dismantled when the Eritrean Assembly, under forcible pressure, voted to abolish itself.<sup>26</sup> Once again Eritrea noticed underneath these moves the glaring inaction of the international community. Little, if any, official outcry was recorded over the changes, despite the responsibility of the United Nations Security Council to do so, according to the federal constitution.<sup>27</sup> Eritreans saw their sovereignty sacrificed to the desires of the international community for the second time, further enhancing the belief that trust did not exist for such a small nation on the global stage, and generating the opinion that only Eritreans themselves could be the protectors of their independence. Accordingly, Eritrean resistance movements sprang up in opposition to its inclusion within Ethiopia. A second Eritrean civil war between competing factions proved to be decisive as the Eritrean's People's Liberation Front (EPLF) led by Isaias Afewerki scored a victory over the older Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF), who moved into exile and ceased to be a dominant political movement.<sup>28</sup> It was during this time that the leaders of the EPLF consolidated their gains and legitimized themselves as the sole voice for Eritrean demands, a position they continue to occupy.

---

<sup>24</sup> Wrong, *I Didn't Do It for You*, 200.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 398.

<sup>26</sup> Yohannes, *Eritrea*, 194.

<sup>27</sup> *Eritrea: The Siege State*, 3.

<sup>28</sup> Iyob, *The Eritrean Struggle for Independence*, 121-2.

In the neighboring province of Tigray, discontent with the central government was also emerging in the 1970's. The EPLF encouraged the establishment of the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) led by Meles Zenawi,<sup>29</sup> and close links developed between the two organizations, with the EPLF assuming the role of big brother to the TPLF.<sup>30</sup> TPLF leaders initially learned much about guerilla warfare and gained valuable combat experience through this association.<sup>31</sup> However, this relationship proved to be hot and cold as the years went on, resulting in a total breakdown from 1985 to 1988 over differences in strategy and ideology.<sup>32</sup> The TPLF questioned the nature of EPLF nationalism and the definition of Eritrea as a separate national identity.<sup>33</sup> Much of this had to do with the fact that half of Eritrea comprised ethnic Tigriyans, leading to a consistent underlying fear that the TPLF would pursue a 'Greater Tigrinya' at the expense of EPLF territory. In fact, the TPLF's initial manifesto in 1976 did advocate such a cause.<sup>34</sup> These machinations annoyed the EPLF greatly, which saw their struggle as one against colonialism, and therefore distinct from the grievances of other ethnic groups within Ethiopia.<sup>35</sup> Cooperation with the TPLF did ensue after 1988, but Isaias Afewerki and his cadres would not forget how once again external factions were questioning Eritrea's right to self-determination. These underlying themes contribute significantly to the definition of official relations today, as both movements are now the ruling parties in their respective nations.

Despite differences, pragmatic concerns dictated that the two movements work together against their common enemy. Relations grew strong once again after 1988, and the two rebel groups joined forces to successfully oust Ethiopian dictator Mengistu Haile Mariam from power in 1991. The euphoria of victory instilled a shared sense of pride and camaraderie, as hardships and sacrifices had

---

<sup>29</sup> Plaut and Gilkes, *Conflict In The Horn: Why Eritrea And Ethiopia Are At War*, 2.

<sup>30</sup> Abbink, "Briefing: The Eritrean-Ethiopian Border Dispute," 557.

<sup>31</sup> Plaut and Gilkes, *Conflict In The Horn: Why Eritrea And Ethiopia Are At War*, 4.

<sup>32</sup> *Eritrea: The Siege State*, 4.

<sup>33</sup> Lata, "The Ethiopian-Eritrea war," 373-4.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 377.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 373.

ultimately paid off. Afewerki and the EPLF assumed themselves to be the leaders of a newly independent nation. Regardless, the EPLF postponed such declarations for two years until an referendum, designed to legitimize Eritrea's claim to independence, had occurred.<sup>36</sup> The TPLF became the major party in the EPRDF, a coalition encompassing four parties ruling over all of Ethiopia, rather than just the province of Tigray. Meles Zenawi, now in his role as Prime Minister of Ethiopia, accepted the Eritrean referendum results and recognized the first African state to be born of succession. Many details between the two seemingly interdependent and fraternal nations had to be worked out, but at the time relations were close, and the future promising.

### Post-Independence Relations

---

The period from 1993 to 1997 was generally characterized by good relations. However, economic concerns began to manifest themselves towards the middle of the decade. The independence of Eritrea had reduced Ethiopia to landlocked nation status, which was not a major issue as long as Ethiopia maintained preferential access to the port of Assab. Assab was essentially an Ethiopian port at this point, as nearly all of its traffic went straight to Ethiopia.<sup>37</sup> The dues from this arrangement in turn provided Eritrea with an important revenue stream. Experts concluded that economic agreements in the post-independence period were favored to the Eritrean side, at the expense of Ethiopia.<sup>38</sup> This was deliberate according to Trivelli, who stated that the TPLF "hoped that the benefits of economic privileges given to Eritrea and Eritreans would ultimately induce, or even force the Eritrean leadership to re-enter into some form of political union with Ethiopia."<sup>39</sup> Taken in this light, while the leadership of

---

<sup>36</sup> The result was the United Nations second venture in helping to determine Eritrea's sovereignty, this time with vastly different results. The UN Observer Mission to Verify the Referendum in Eritrea (UNOVER) oversaw a voting process in which more than 99% of Eritreans chose to become an independent nation in 1993 - "Political History and Governance."

<sup>37</sup> *Eritrea: The Siege State*, 5.

<sup>38</sup> Abbink, "Briefing: The Eritrean-Ethiopian Border Dispute," 558.

<sup>39</sup> Lata, "The Ethiopian-Eritrea war," 377.

Ethiopia had acceded to Eritrea's independence request, they did not view it as a permanent state of affairs. They felt the two nations were linked by history, ethnicity, and now economics, which in due course would take precedence over a short period of Italian occupation. Again the questionable legitimacy of Eritrean existence and self-determination weighed heavily on the Ethiopian leadership, who were designing policies with this in mind.

Eritrea on the other hand, considered its independence to be permanent and irreversible, and began creating symbols of statehood to which all nations are entitled. One of these symbols affected Ethiopia greatly, when Eritrea instituted its own currency in 1997. Prior to that time, both Ethiopia and Eritrea had freely used the Ethiopian *birr*. The introduction of the Eritrean *nakfa* complicated free Ethiopian port access, as the need to exchange currency on all transactions essentially made Assab a foreign port. Tit for tat currency wars aggravated the situation, as each nation went to lengths to assault the other's monetary policy.<sup>40</sup> This, along with the Ethiopian government's attempts to somewhat redress overly favorable economic policies,<sup>41</sup> ratcheted up tensions, moving the two neighbors away from the initial euphoric honeymoon period, and towards the harsher reality of needing to compromise on substantial issues that affect the very core of state-to-state relations in the international system.

The lack of institutional mechanisms to resolve disputes also meant that official relations defaulted to the personal feelings of the two leaders. In 1996, an aircraft personally lent by Zenawi to Afewerki caught on fire during its takeoff from Addis Abba with Afewerki on board. In the aftermath the defiant Eritrean leader accused the Ethiopian Prime Minister to his face of attempting to assassinate him. A U.S. State Department cable suggests relations between the two leaders have never been the

---

<sup>40</sup> Abbink, "Briefing: The Eritrean-Ethiopian Border Dispute," 55.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 558.

same since,<sup>42</sup> and reveal how in the absence of institutional links, official relations ebbed and flowed in the similar pattern as personal relations between leaders. These mounting aggressions brought a close to the idyllic post-independence period, and found an outlet in the never fully addressed international boundary line, another vital symbol of sovereignty and independence.

### **The Outbreak of War**

---

The start of the 1998-2000 border war that irrevocably altered Ethiopian-Eritrean relations came as a surprise to most observers.<sup>43</sup> In hindsight, those previous avenues of friction had been laid out, but at the time, such an outcome did not seem inevitable. Prior to May 1998, various minor skirmishes had taken place along the undemarcated Ethiopian-Eritrean border. Certain areas that had always been claimed by Eritrea but never acted upon happened to be under effective Ethiopian control, including the contentious town of Badme.<sup>44</sup> A dispute arose as to the definition of territorial control, whether it implied an adherence to colonial treaties, or defaulted to de facto administration.<sup>45</sup>

The events of the 6<sup>th</sup> of May 1998 were portrayed as a forceful attempt by Eritrea to assert its sovereignty. Following a confrontation over tax revenues in Badme, a few Eritrean soldiers were killed by the Ethiopian military.<sup>46</sup> Eritrea, offended that land claimed to be theirs was not only paying taxes to Ethiopia and that their citizens had been killed in the area, took a hard-line stance. Given the climate of rising economic tensions, it has been surmised that the situation might have been used as a means of obtaining continued favorable economic terms with their larger neighbor.<sup>47</sup> If that was the case, it proved to be a grave miscalculation.

---

<sup>42</sup> U.S. State Department, "08ASMARA543."

<sup>43</sup> Kidane Mengisteab, *Anatomy of the African Tragedy*, 230.

<sup>44</sup> Lata, "The Ethiopian-Eritrea war," 374.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 380.

<sup>46</sup> Ewing, *Ethiopia and Eritrea in Turmoil*, 2.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

Eritrean forces moved in quickly to Badme, and by May 12<sup>th</sup> they had taken control of the entire area, catching Ethiopia off guard.<sup>48</sup> The Ethiopian government saw Eritrea as behaving arrogantly, and having overplayed their hand.<sup>49</sup> Afewerki, following the traditional Eritrean war motto of 'never kneel down',<sup>50</sup> was not prepared to give up territory he viewed as an integral part of Eritrea's sovereign borders. The stakes had been raised high by both sides, and neither could afford to back down now. With no progress on securing Eritrea's exit, intense warfare broke out in early June. Air raids from both sides killed numerous civilians caught up in the hostilities, yet Eritrea held its ground.<sup>51</sup> International mediation efforts sprung into action to avert further aggression, but the positions held by Ethiopia and Eritrea were irreconcilable. The international community united around a call for a return to May 6<sup>th</sup> pre-fighting positions as the basis for peace and further talks. Ethiopia readily accepted this, as it gave them back control of Badme. However, this was anathema to Eritrean diplomatic ears, who vigorously claimed that no sovereign boundaries had been violated and thus the international community could not ask Eritrea to retreat from positions within their own independent nation.<sup>52</sup> Matters were at an impasse, and the situation did not change much until early 1999.

During the eight month lull both sides were busy rearming and modernizing their militaries. It is estimated that, despite being two of the poorer nations of the world with pressing development needs, Eritrea spent \$240 million on imports ranging from Russian Mig-29's to Mi-17 helicopters to surface to air missiles. Ethiopia on the other hand spent \$300 million, including T-55 tanks, Su-27 fighter planes, Mi-24 helicopter gunships, and Mi-8 cargo helicopters.<sup>53</sup> The type of weaponry sought indicated a shift

---

<sup>48</sup> Kidane Mengisteab, *Anatomy of the African Tragedy*, 234.

<sup>49</sup> Abbink, "E-mail interview."

<sup>50</sup> "Ethiopia and Eritrea -- An acrimonious divorce," 1.

<sup>51</sup> Ewing, *Ethiopia and Eritrea in Turmoil*, 2.

<sup>52</sup> Lata, "The Ethiopian-Eritrea war," 381.

<sup>53</sup> Ewing, *Ethiopia and Eritrea in Turmoil*, 2.

from previous experiences of guerilla warfare by the ruling parties of both nations towards a more conventional style of fighting, befitting of state to state combat.

Following Eritrea's refusal of the international mediation plan, Ethiopia launched a full scale attack in February 1999, termed 'Operation Sunset.' The name was a clever play on words, referring to a comment made by Isaias Afewerki that Eritrean "withdrawal was as likely as the sun not rising."<sup>54</sup> This round proved to be disastrous for Eritrea, as they were forced to leave Badme by the end of the month. Following this complete reversal of military fortune, came a reversal of diplomatic position. Eritrea now was prepared to accept the preconditions of international mediation, while Ethiopia, determined to push their upper hand in an attempt to see Afewerki fall from power, dithered.<sup>55</sup> A stalemate on the ground was achieved, which lasted until May 2000. During that month Ethiopia opened up a third round of fighting across the entire border. The gains came quick, and Ethiopia captured many other disputed posts along the frontier.<sup>56</sup> Battlefield realities spurred Eritrea's new found vigor for international diplomacy, and during crisis talks in Algiers the next month a cessation of hostilities agreement was signed by both parties. Ethiopia's dominant position on the ground was reflected in the negotiations taking place and the agreements signed.<sup>57</sup> After further discussion, a comprehensive peace agreement was signed on December 12<sup>th</sup>, 2000, formally bringing an end to the three short but intense rounds of fighting that came to be known as the Eritrean-Ethiopian war. Positions had switched dramatically since Eritrea's initial incursion two years prior, but the status of the international border remained up in the air. There had been no true definition achieved aside from military might makes diplomatic right.

---

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Healy, *Eritrea's Regional Role and Foreign Policy: Past, Present and Future Perspectives*, 3.

<sup>56</sup> Lata, "The Ethiopian-Eritrea war," 382.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.



## Enter the United Nations

---

The Algiers Agreement that ended the war created two main bodies to adjudicate outstanding issues. First, a claims commission would be set up to evaluate damages incurred on both sides. The second body was a boundary commission, which came to be known officially as the Ethiopian-Eritrean Boundary Commission, or EEBC. The purpose of this body was to get to the heart of the border dispute and facilitate a final, lasting solution. The institutions were set up under the aegis of the United Nations, with both nations also nominating panel members. Further, a United Nations Mission to Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE) was established to separate the belligerent parties and execute the EEBC mandate. A Temporary Security Zone (TSZ), 25 kilometers wide, was instituted as a buffer zone. Reflecting the realities of power politics, the zone was based only on Ethiopian withdrawal of territories from the last round of fighting, meaning that those captured in the second round remained under its control.<sup>58</sup> This denoted that the majority of the TSZ was carved out of Eritrean territory that was not in dispute to either nation, another perceived infringement of sovereignty for the Eritrean leadership.

The Eritrea-Ethiopia Boundary Commission (EEBC) was unusual as far as boundary commissions go, since it was responsible for not only the delineation of the border, but also its demarcation.<sup>59</sup> Both parties agreed to follow a continental tradition of applying archaic colonial treaties to determine borders, consciously ignoring aspects of human geography,<sup>60</sup> current administration, on the ground military forces, or other pertinent matters. Three treaties between Ethiopia and Italy, dating from 1900, 1902, and 1908 set the basis for the border commission's decision.<sup>61</sup> The commission also was explicitly requested by the parties to not rule *ex aequo et bono*, or essentially without the power to make a

---

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Shaw, "Title, Control, and Closure? The Experience of the Eritrea-Ethiopia Boundary Commission," 757.

<sup>60</sup> *Ethiopia and Eritrea: Preventing War*, 4-5.

<sup>61</sup> Shaw, "Title, Control, and Closure? The Experience of the Eritrea-Ethiopia Boundary Commission," 756.

decision based on what is right and good, ignoring the law.<sup>62</sup> These rigid restrictions imposed on the EEBC by Ethiopia and Eritrea alike made ascertaining a ruling more straightforward, but became the roots of contention later on.

The U.N mission to Ethiopia and Eritrea began deploying as the EEBC process was beginning. While the nature of peacekeeping had shifted since the early 1990's, this mission was a throwback to Cold War days. Security Council Resolution 1320 allowed for up to a total of 4,200 troops for the mission.<sup>63</sup> The purpose was to establish a buffer zone between interstate warring parties, so space for lasting peace could develop. Operating under a Ch.VI mandate, the main functions of the mission had to do with monitoring the cessation of hostilities, the TSZ, the position of Eritrean troops outside the 25km TSZ buffer zone, and the redeployment of Ethiopian troops to pre-February 1999 positions.<sup>64</sup>

### **EEBC Ruling**

---

In April of 2002 the Eritrea-Ethiopia Boundary Commission made its anticipated report. The main point of contention was the dusty town of Badme and its 5,000 inhabitants, which had grown in size and stature through the course of war. Badme itself contained little strategic value; there were no natural resources or compelling historical ties, as the area was sparsely inhabited during time of the colonial treaties.<sup>65</sup> Pundits referred to the situation as “two bald men fighting over a comb.”<sup>66</sup> The initial EEBC ruling made little specific mention of the town, and both sides thought they had come out victorious.<sup>67</sup> Upon further review, Badme was found to be located in Eritrea and not Ethiopia. Once that became apparent Ethiopia began to protest the ruling, unsuccessfully appealing to both the

---

<sup>62</sup> Healy and Plaut, *Ethiopia and Eritrea: Allergic to Persuasion*.

<sup>63</sup> U.N. Security Council, *Security Council Resolution 1320*.

<sup>64</sup> “UNMEE: United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea.”

<sup>65</sup> “Q&A.”

<sup>66</sup> *Ethiopia and Eritrea: Preventing War*, 2.

<sup>67</sup> Müller, “State making in the Horn of Africa,” 512.

commission and the Security Council.<sup>68</sup> The vehement reaction by Ethiopia caught many observers off guard, and immediately complicated what was thought to be a relatively straightforward mission with clear objectives and means of termination.

Ethiopia initially tried legal methods to revisit the ruling, but the Algiers Agreement made it resolutely clear that any decision would be final and binding, with no possibility of appeal.<sup>69</sup> Following this rejection Ethiopia's stance took a more provocative tone, with Prime Minister Meles Zenawi labeling the commission's work as "totally illegal, unjust, and irresponsible."<sup>70</sup> In 2004 he agreed to accept the commission's ruling "in principle," while proposing a five-point plan for dialogue with Eritrea to resolve outstanding issues, the most pertinent being that of Badme.<sup>71</sup> Ethiopia continued to occupy and administer the town just as they had before the war and EEBC ruling, with little change on the ground. Zenawi was under intense domestic pressure to pursue a tough stance. Much of his support base was derived from Tigray, the neighboring province to Eritrea. Hardliners within his party vowed never to accept the loss of territory it viewed as integral to their homeland.<sup>72</sup> Furthermore, these hardliners had never genuinely accepted the independence of Eritrea, nor forgiven Zenawi for turning Ethiopia into the world's most populous landlocked nation.<sup>73</sup>

The threat of a coup by these factions may have been played up by Zenawi himself, to ensure the West not pressure him too much out of fear that someone more intransigent would take his place.<sup>74</sup> Regardless, accepting the boundary commission's ruling would have been highly damaging politically and tantamount to admitting defeat in the war with Eritrea; a war in which Ethiopia viewed themselves

---

<sup>68</sup> *Ethiopia and Eritrea: War or Peace?*, 6.

<sup>69</sup> *Special Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea*, 4.

<sup>70</sup> Healy and Plaut, *Ethiopia and Eritrea: Allergic to Persuasion*.

<sup>71</sup> *Ethiopia and Eritrea: Preventing War*, 6.

<sup>72</sup> *Ethiopia and Eritrea: War or Peace?*, 10.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>74</sup> *Ethiopia and Eritrea: Stopping the Slide to War*, 4.

as the victims and Eritrea as unlawful aggressors. This stance would be further hardened when the results of the Claims Commission in 2005 declared Eritrea's 1998 invasion of Badme as illegal under international law, further complicating the situation.<sup>75</sup> Ethiopia had also been the victor militarily, and saw no reason to give up a territory it administered, had secured by force, and was populated by people who considered themselves to be Ethiopians.<sup>76</sup> Yet the end result was that despite those practical considerations, Ethiopia had willingly submitted the issue to final and binding arbitration. They had also insisted, along with Eritrea, to base the decision solely on colonial treaties and international law, ignoring aspects of human geography and ground realities which may have swayed the situation in their favor.

Eritrea's reaction was understandably different. They saw the EEBC decision as legitimizing their actions in the war, and a legal return of what belonged to them. Eritrea had played by international rules previously when they abided by a losing decision on the Hanish islands awarded to Yemen in 1997, and now they fully expected Ethiopia to do the same.<sup>77</sup> As the victor Eritrea predictably wanted nothing more but to begin the immediate demarcation of the decision. They saw no reason to question the ruling and considered Ethiopia's delaying actions to be illegal.<sup>78</sup> In either case Badme had grown in stature beyond its status as a small, dusty town of 5,000 inhabitants, but symbolized a flashpoint in the deteriorating relations between two former partners. The ruling regimes in both countries tied their national policy objectives in relation with each other over the issue, and the costs had been too high already to lose now. Afewerki was suffering from a crisis of legitimacy internally over his role and conduct of the war; the EEBC ruling vindicating his stance to a degree and his posturing in effect tied his political fortunes to its full implementation to demonstrate a successful war outcome. While Eritrea

---

<sup>75</sup> Healy and Plaut, *Ethiopia and Eritrea: Allergic to Persuasion*.

<sup>76</sup> Bhalla, "Badme."

<sup>77</sup> *Ethiopia and Eritrea: War or Peace?*, 8.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

technically was in the right, their rigid stance in refusing to engage in discussion until the completion of the demarcation process precluded the presence of any meaningful dialogue that may have resolved the issue early on, and diminished their standing in the diplomatic world.

During this time there was little apparent pressure from the United Nations, aside from bi-annual diplomatic urgings via mission mandate renewals, to push Ethiopia towards acceptance. Sanctions were not discussed, and UNMEE operating under its Ch.VI mandate could not make moves to coercively institute compliance.<sup>79</sup> As a major party to the Algiers Agreement, the United States was preoccupied with war in Iraq and Afghanistan. The Bush administration viewed Ethiopia, and specifically Zenawi, as a useful ally in the war on terror, and avoided pushing him too hard on the boundary commission issue.<sup>80</sup> The European Union Parliament periodically issued concerned statements, but little concrete action was taken by the organization itself.<sup>81</sup> The OAU was the other witness to the Algiers Agreement, and Eritrea accused its successor organization, the AU, of also maintaining a clear bias towards Ethiopia.<sup>82</sup>

Eritrea was frustrated by the dearth of movement around the status quo, and began to take out those frustrations on the closest symbol of the international community, UNMEE. Eritrea assumed an increasingly belligerent posture towards the mission, by banning helicopter flights, suspending fuel shipments and expelling certain expatriates.<sup>83</sup> This garnered the attention of the Security Council, but portrayed Eritrea as the obstructionist party to a peaceful resolution, rather than Ethiopia. Matters came to a head on July 31<sup>st</sup> 2008 when the Security Council terminated UNMEE, citing an inability to

---

<sup>79</sup> *Ethiopia and Eritrea: Preventing War*, 14.

<sup>80</sup> *Beyond the Fragile Peace Between Ethiopia and Eritrea: Averting New War*, 6.

<sup>81</sup> European Parliament, *Situation in the Horn of Africa*.

<sup>82</sup> *Service for Life*.

<sup>83</sup> Healy, *Lost Opportunities in the Horn of Africa: How Conflicts Connect and Peace Agreements Unravel*, 15.

execute its mandate, bringing the mission to an inglorious end.<sup>84</sup> The EEBC also considered its work done at the end of 2007, never physically demarcating the border, but settling for a 'virtual' demarcation instead, supported by Eritrea but dismissed as fanciful by Ethiopia.<sup>85</sup> Essentially the international community exited the situation without having resolved anything. The border remained undemarcated, Ethiopia continued to occupy Badme, and Eritrea had been tainted in the eyes of the international community through their refusal to play the diplomatic game and the frustrations taken out on the neutral UNMEE mission. While the international community had been able to bring about an end to overt conflict, the failure of movement around the core issues strengthened the sense of discord between Ethiopia and Eritrea. This discord was simultaneously playing itself out in Somalia by proxy, where international presence was not as apparent or effective in preventing violent competition.

### **No War, No Peace**

---

Since the pullout of the United Nations Mission to Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE) in 2008, many analysts have warned of a resumption of war given the lack of an international mission to hold the parties back.<sup>86</sup> Any small incident could trigger grave fault lines, as the war of 1998-2000 began in a similar fashion. However, in the three years since there have been isolated claims of border skirmishes, but no large scale battles. Currently it seems a situation of 'no war, no peace' has taken root between Ethiopia and Eritrea.<sup>87</sup> It appears that neither side has much of an interest in fighting. Eritrea is pragmatic enough to realize it lost the previous battle and simply cannot match up militarily against Ethiopia. The nation attempts to address this imbalance through massive arms spending at the expense of national development projects, seemingly endless and poorly paid forced conscription of all youths,

---

<sup>84</sup> U.N. Security Council, *Security Council Resolution 1827*.

<sup>85</sup> Healy, *Lost Opportunities in the Horn of Africa: How Conflicts Connect and Peace Agreements Unravel*, 16.

<sup>86</sup> *Ethiopia and Eritrea: Stopping the Slide to War*, 2.

<sup>87</sup> Martell, "A View from Eritrea," 332.

and the backing of non-state armed groups in Ethiopia's eastern flank and Somalia. Given that Ethiopia has a population 15 times larger and a GDP 20 times greater,<sup>88</sup> this gap has not yet been closed.

This does not preclude the possibility that Afewerki might feel his nation is ready to put up a fight and instigate hostilities in the future. There is also a belief within the ELPF that they will outlast the Meles regime, which will in turn, alter the dynamics of the current situation.<sup>89</sup> Much of this derives from the lack of popular support for the ERPDP during the 2005 Ethiopian national elections; Afewerki assumes that elections in the future may sweep Meles from power. However, considering the state of internal discontent in Eritrea, Isaias is also well aware that his survival depends on being right in his next move. Miscalculating will do more than just cost him some territory, but most likely his job.

Domestically, Isaias uses the Ethiopian conflict as an excuse to stave off reforms. For example the Eritrean Constitution, approved by a Constituent Assembly in 1997, has never been enacted.<sup>90</sup> The official stance on the delay in implementation was the outbreak of the 1998 border war, and in the 13 years that have passed since, the continuing threat posed by Ethiopia has kept the nation on constant alert and thus unable to execute true reform. This has also meant that since the original independence referendum, elections scheduled for December 2001 were postponed and have never been held.<sup>91</sup> Asmara has used the state of affairs as a pretext for other repressive actions. Forced conscription is an affliction all young Eritreans face, with over 35% of able-bodied youth forcibly enlisted.<sup>92</sup> Officially service is meant to last eighteen months, but in reality it drags on indefinitely.<sup>93</sup> This subjugation of youth is justified by the government's need to keep a large cadre of ready soldiers on hand, due to the continuing nature of the threat posed by Ethiopia.

---

<sup>88</sup> Pham, "Eritrea: Spoiler Exacerbates Crisis in the Horn of Africa and Beyond."

<sup>89</sup> Healy, *Lost Opportunities in the Horn of Africa: How Conflicts Connect and Peace Agreements Unravel*, 18.

<sup>90</sup> Selassie, *The Making of the Eritrean Constitution*.

<sup>91</sup> Kibreab, *Eritrea*, 200.

<sup>92</sup> This totals about 320,000 troops - Ewing, *Ethiopia and Eritrea in Turmoil*, 5.

<sup>93</sup> *Service for Life*, 48.

Activists in opposition groups, media, civil society, and religious organizations have all been detained and harassed under such principles. Notably, fifteen members of the ruling PDFJ party wrote an open letter in 2001 challenging Isaias's stranglehold on power and calling for national debate. Of those fifteen, eleven were detained and have never been seen again.<sup>94</sup> Generally, the situation with Ethiopia grants a pretext for Afewerki and his ruling clique to exercise totalitarian control and engage in harshly repressive internal action designed to keep his position in power unassailable, hence another reason for Eritrea to mind by the status quo.

Interestingly, Ethiopia has made it clear through various statements that they will not be the first to initiate hostilities. In late 2007, as the EEBC border commission acceptance deadline was approaching, Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles Zenawi remarked "We will never, ever go to war with Eritrea unless there is a full-scale invasion . . . That is the only condition that would force us to fight Eritrea. I don't expect the Eritrean side to carry out full-scale invasion because I think they know it is going to be suicide."<sup>95</sup> He reaffirmed those remarks in May 2008, stating that "I have said over and over again, unless there is a full-scale invasion of our territories, no matter what Isaias does, there won't be a single Ethiopian tank in Eritrea."<sup>96</sup> Yet through these statements Zenawi has also made it openly clear that he will respond to aggression with extreme force, striving to make the next battle the last. That ostensibly implies marching to the ports of Assab and Massawa to rectify the perceived mistake held by some that he made when granting Eritrea's independence and allowing Ethiopia to become a landlocked nation, and onwards to Asmara itself to remove Afewerki from power.<sup>97</sup>

---

<sup>94</sup> Lyons, "The Ethiopia-Eritrea Conflict and the Search for Peace in the Horn of Africa," 170.

<sup>95</sup> "Meles Predicts Ethiopia-Eritrea Boundary Deadline to Pass Without Incident."

<sup>96</sup> Healy, "Hard and Soft Power: Some Thoughts on the Practice of Eritrean Foreign Policy," 157.

<sup>97</sup> Cliffe, "Eritrea 2008," 326-27.



Ethiopia is unlikely to be the aggressor because they benefit from the status quo. They are currently occupying Badme, with little change on the ground since the EEBC verdict.<sup>98</sup> There is insufficient international pressure on them to concede this position. Much of this is due to Ethiopia's status as regional power, the not completely sullied notions of Ethiopia as a modernizing example for Africa and Meles Zenawi as a key leader in the 'African renaissance,' the significant amounts of poverty reduction assistance pouring into the country to uphold this example, and, most decisively, the high esteem the United States reserves for the country in the Global War on Terror.<sup>99</sup>

The lack of international pressure combined with its current image ensures that Ethiopia benefits more than Eritrea from the status quo. Ethiopia's skillful maneuvering of the diplomatic field, in contrast to Eritrea's squandering of its cache of international sympathy,<sup>100</sup> further exemplifies the point that they would have more to lose than gain by being the initial aggressor in any new fight. Despite Meles's tarnished reputation as a democrat and the illegality of his actions with regards to the Eritrean border, he remains in good diplomatic standing with the West. Any instigation of violence or illegal aggression would cause a major disruption of this status, altering the balance in a way that could benefit Eritrea. Furthermore, Ethiopia has significant troops and resources devoted to the conflicts in Somalia and its own internal tussles with the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) and Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF). This means that a total war with Eritrea would necessitate the redeployment of critical resources from areas where the resulting security vacuum would be detrimental to core interests of the Ethiopian state. Zenawi also sees no reason to act now as he also views his counterpart in Eritrea as

---

<sup>98</sup> Lyons, *Avoiding Conflict in the Horn of Africa*, 9.

<sup>99</sup> Nega, "Ethiopia is Headed for Chaos," 189-90.

<sup>100</sup> Müller, "State making in the Horn of Africa," 514.

inherently weak and unstable, assuming Afewerki's demise is on the horizon given the faltering economy and tenuous hold on power the PFDJ enjoy.<sup>101</sup>

Zenawi also has political reasons to ensure the status quo persists. Hardliners in his party often blame him for 'losing Eritrea,' and consequently condemning Ethiopia to becoming the world's most populous landlocked nation.<sup>102</sup> These elements have never genuinely accepted Eritrean independence, and they castigate Zenawi for not pushing deeper into Eritrea during the border war to overthrow Isaias, or at a minimum seize control of the port of Assab.<sup>103</sup> Often they portray Zenawi as too close to Eritrea,<sup>104</sup> an absurd accusation given events since 1998. However, this faction makes up a powerful portion of Zenawi's ethnic Tigrayan support base, inhibiting his ability to compromise. With the consolidation of power after the 2010 elections, Meles has a little bit more breathing room, but still must tread lightly in this sensitive area.<sup>105</sup> One way he appeals to such factions is to maintain the status quo and uphold Ethiopia's illegal occupation of Badme. In this manner a crucial symbol of Tigrayan sovereignty remains in Ethiopian control, satisfying certain internal demands and portraying Zenawi as being 'tough' on his small neighbor to the north. As Eritrea continues to shoot itself in the foot diplomatically on the international stage, this position looks less and less intransigent with each subsequent maneuver. Simply put, Ethiopia has little to gain from altering the status quo, and Eritrea does not have the means to do so at the current time, hence the situation of 'no war,' but also 'no peace.' There exists a logical rationale to each side's reluctance to move past the current impasse that is preventing the reoccurrence of all-out war.

---

<sup>101</sup> Lyons, "Ethiopia's Convergence of Crises," 157.

<sup>102</sup> Healy, *Lost Opportunities in the Horn of Africa: How Conflicts Connect and Peace Agreements Unravel*, 17.

<sup>103</sup> *Ethiopia and Eritrea: Stopping the Slide to War*, 3.

<sup>104</sup> Abbink, "E-mail interview."

<sup>105</sup> "Author interview with a regional expert."

This cold peace was initially instigated with the advent of the UNMEE mission, but in the wake of its failure to resolve the situation and subsequent pullout, the tenuous dynamic restraining the two nations remains in effect. Yet this situation of ‘no war, no peace,’ is exactly the kind of condition needed for a classic Cold War-style proxy war. It is clear that neither embittered nation is prepared to attack the other. This does not mean however, that Eritrea and Ethiopia are not doing anything to challenge each other, it is just not occurring directly. The sort of cold peace that exists along their border makes way for a hot war elsewhere. Ethiopia’s strategic interests in Somalia, the nearly two decades of stateless anarchy persisting in that nation, and its location in Ethiopia’s vulnerable underbelly, make it the perfect place for Eritrea to take the fight in hopes of weakening its larger neighbor. The imposition of relations onto the battlefields of Somalia via proxy war has decreased the likelihood of achieving a semblance of peace in that nation anytime soon, while hardening the enmity between Ethiopia and Eritrea to the detriment of the entire Horn of Africa region.

## SECTION III – WAR BY PROXY

### Proxy Warfare

---

Proxy war is an age old tactic used by large and small powers alike. Essentially it entails getting someone else to fight for you, whether that denotes a temporary allegiance against a common enemy or the creation of a fighting force a degree removed from the center. States can also use local groups to complement their own efforts, but that is less war by proxy than war with proxies. Loveman defines proxy war as simply “when State A encourages the people of State C to take up arms against State B, which happens to be its own adversary.”<sup>106</sup> Implied is that State A is either unable or unwilling to fight themselves. They prefer providing various means of support to continue the battle rather than getting

---

<sup>106</sup> Loveman, “Assessing the phenomenon of proxy intervention,” 30.

involved. The reasons for this could be manifold, stemming from a lack of public support, to weaknesses in the security apparatus of the state, to an aspiration of pursuing interests clandestinely. Regardless, the common thread behind these and other reasons is that the state is unwilling to directly confront its adversary. The reluctance to engage in open combat is what drives the use of proxies, as they supply a means of continuing to achieve objectives while not forcing a state to rely on more encompassing methods it would prefer to avoid.

Cold wars, situations where states are in conflict with each other but are not seeking direct confrontation, easily lend themselves to the utilization of proxies. Such forces offer the desired means of continuing the conflict without having to resort to full scale engagement. Proxy war reached a crescendo during the Soviet Union-United States Cold War in the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Both superpowers made regular use of the tactic in their global battle to check each other's advances. The African continent suffered tremendously under such policies, as the superpowers became involved in local political struggles, ostensibly stoking an increase in intensity and a prolongation of hostilities. This pattern of behavior exhibited itself outside of Africa as well, most notably in South-East Asia and Central America. The basis for these proxy wars was for the superpowers to use a third world nation's political conflagrations to further their own ideological aims. This is considered to be two sided proxy war since each superpower typically employed their own proxies in open combat with each other. Neither the United States nor Soviet Union were prepared to directly confront each other, hence the Cold War, and "no single direct and overt incident of war" occurred between the two.<sup>107</sup> Yet they were not content to sit back either. They sustained competing adversaries in faraway places without infringing upon each other's territory, giving rise to this classic model of war by proxy.

---

<sup>107</sup> Ibid., 38.

Classic proxy warfare contains certain typical elements that mark its uniqueness as a tactic of force. First there must be a third country battlefield, a place where aggression can manifest itself. Usually such a state is too weak to resist and thus is most likely failing, or failed. These states are often in crisis themselves already, and external actors see fit to become involved. Additionally, the two external countries must be antagonists, but unwilling to directly confront each other. This is the cold war element, aggressive tensions exist between the nations but for whatever reason they are not prepared to take the fight openly to each other. There is a cold peace that exists between them, with heated aggressions occurring elsewhere. Lastly, it is helpful for non-state armed groups to already be in place, though this is not always a necessary component. The conflict between two nations is typically easier to extend and impose onto a new arena, rather than instigating hostilities from scratch. The ability of states to take advantage of existing situations of conflict is referred to as using “targets of opportunity.”<sup>108</sup> However, states can also play a major role in meshing various movements together into a larger, more threatening fighting force, thereby creating an effective resistance which might not have come into existence otherwise. External support can also help opposition groups grow and mature into viable adversaries.<sup>109</sup> Furthermore, the relationship between the patron state and the recipient can be complex, but typically revolves around what Duner terms a “compatibility of interests.”<sup>110</sup> This means the parties outwardly share a common adversary or goal, regardless of how tenuous commitment on either side might actually be. The traditional proxy wars of the Cold War conformed to the elements stated above, and henceforth will be referred to as ‘classic proxy wars.’

The end of the Cold War bequeathed a dramatic shift in the global security paradigm. As the focus shifted from interstate to intrastate conflict, the use of classic proxy warfare went on the decline. The obvious reason was that the United States and the remnants of the former USSR were no longer

---

<sup>108</sup> Shultz, *The Soviet Union and Revolutionary Warfare*, 188.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

<sup>110</sup> Loveman, “Assessing the phenomenon of proxy intervention,” 31.

engaged in an ideological competition bent on using indirect means to divide the world into two camps. Yet the decline of classic proxy wars did not imply a discontinuation of the tactic all together; in fact it could be argued that it led to increased levels worldwide. Proxy war now held a different meaning. Rather than two powers indirectly fighting each other on a neutral third country site, fighting now frequently occurred within the borders of a rival nation. Thus while losing the distant third country battlefield, nations instead became locked into battles with neighbors, destabilizing their own backyards. Governments now were directly affected by this, even if national forces were not overtly challenging each other. Often battles were one-sided proxy affairs, as the patron nation pursued interests by proxy in another country, which fought against that proxy to defend itself (sometimes without being able to retaliate in the patron nation). In this lens proxy war no longer belonged solely within the realm of cold wars. Nations could be involved in very hot wars against each other, using rebel groups to infiltrate sovereign borders rather than national armies, giving rise to a new usage of an old tactic.

There are a myriad of structural factors why the end of the Cold War did not signify the end of proxy war as a tactic, but rather its proliferation in a slightly different form. For starters, the shift to intrastate warfare produced a proliferation of non-state armed groups looking for external sources of assistance in their struggles, creating a multitude of opportunities. This combined with the fact that the typical patron states moved from a global superpower to a less well off nation. These less wealthy nations exhibited a desire to influence regional politics and increase their stature, but were forced to do so in a more localized context given the limitations of their power.<sup>111</sup> War by proxy proved to be a useful tool as it created the conditions for increasing influence at a premium cost. Relative to all out war, supporting an insurgency in a neighboring nation is a significantly cheaper option in terms of finances, domestic political support, and international diplomacy. The use of war to settle disputes

---

<sup>111</sup> Byman et al., *Trends in Outside Support for Insurgent Movements*, 103-4.

between nation-states has become progressively frowned upon in the global stage, and that only increases the attractiveness of the proxy option. In addition, the use of proxies also creates an unintended cycle of backlash, with nations courting rebels in neighboring countries simply because an opposing nation is doing the same to it. The lack of stark ideological divides as a masking point also allows for relationships to be more fluid since they are based on pragmatic geopolitical goals rather than adherence to a common cause and support for fellow brethren. As a result support often starts or stops abruptly, depending on the goals of the patron state. This permits non-state actor relationships to be easily resumed and breeds a general atmosphere of distrust on behalf of competing nation states, leading to a quick renewal of proxy battles when deemed beneficial.

Beyond changes in the global environment, the precise motivations to engage in this type of combat are varied. Daniel Byman, in a RAND report entitled *Trends in Outside Support for Insurgent Movements*, lays out a number of potential rationales. Chief among the extensive list are to gain increased regional influence, a desire to destabilize certain neighbors, the pursuit of regime change, revenge, and supporting groups of a common identity.<sup>112</sup> In terms of regional influence, a nation may seek to increase its stature, and supporting armed groups can be a means of achieving that. Such assistance can pressure neighbors and raise bargaining leverage.<sup>113</sup> Destabilization can alter the power balance of a neighbor vis-à-vis the supporting nation, by tying down troops and affecting economic performance.<sup>114</sup> Byman notes regime change as a difficult, but persistent goal as nations continuously endeavor to install more friendly governments in their neighborhood.<sup>115</sup> Revenge has become a common motivator in the post Cold War African context, with governments often resorting to bolstering

---

<sup>112</sup> Ibid., 23-29.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid., 23,31.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid., 32-33.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid., 33-34.

rebel groups in a certain nation specifically because that nation was doing the same to it.<sup>116</sup> As proxy wars have come closer to home, they have become more personal and consequently incite a cycle of perpetuating violence and revolving non-state actors. This has been a key problem in the Horn of Africa. The last relevant motivation is supporting those with a common identity, be it religious, ethnic, or other. However, Byman points out that while this may often appear on the surface as a matter of propping up fellow comrades, a deeper analysis reveals ambitions are typically more geopolitical than altruistic.<sup>117</sup> Accordingly, the common bond that binds patron and client is not as strong as would be assumed, and is subject to the whims of the patron state. There are other motivations to engage in proxy war, but these mentioned here have been the more pertinent driving forces amongst the nations of region in question, with destabilization being a principal motivation of Eritrea.

Along with a range of motivations, there is also a range of support provided by a nation, and often the two are interconnected. Byman distinguishes between three levels of support provided, critical, valuable, and minor.<sup>118</sup> One form of critical support is the contribution of sanctuary in the patron nation and/or safe transit to conflict areas.<sup>119</sup> This becomes of particular importance in the post Cold War era as proxy wars are fought more locally, and thus by neighbors readily able to provide such benefits crucial to a non-state actor's survival. Other forms of critical assistance noted are the provision of financial resources, political support, and occasionally direct military intervention.<sup>120</sup> While states use proxies often because they are unwilling to get involved, the escalation of a conflict sometimes demands direct intervention. In this case though, while patronage is still being provided to the client, the proxy nature of the conflict essentially comes to a close as the patron nation has crossed the line from ancillary to principal involvement. All forms of critical support will be seen in the Somalia case study,

---

<sup>116</sup> Ibid., 34.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid., 36-37.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid., 84-100.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid., 84-86.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid., 87-92.



perpetrated by Ethiopia and Eritrea alike. Byman describes training and the supply of weapons or material as valuable, but not critical, forms of support, because while necessary insurgents can typically acquire such skills and goods through other means.<sup>121</sup> That presupposes the insurgent group in question is effective and strong enough to fend for itself instead of being dependent on foreign backers, indicating a level of sophistication and organization not exhibited by some. Lastly, Byman categorizes the delivery of fighters, intelligence, organizational aid, and inspiration as minor forms of support, since they rarely play decisive roles.<sup>122</sup> The provision of fighters is considered minor because if a movement is unable to attract its own local recruits, it is unlikely to become entrenched and successful in the long run.<sup>123</sup> Most of these valuable and minor elements will also be witnessed in the Somali arena. One prominent factor to add that is not explicitly stated in Byman's classification, is the ability of an outside nation to provide links with other sympathetic donors or fighting forces with similar aims. This role as a coordinator is an important one, and frequently can lead to conflict escalation.

There are debates as to how effective engaging in proxy war truly is. The goals and motivations a state is pursuing affect how it measures effectiveness. The fact that war by proxy has been such a common foreign policy tool in the Horn of Africa demonstrates that states either find it to be useful or lack other effective means of pursuing their interests. A combination of both is likely. Support to a rebel group can be a low cost option, as it is typically easy to turn off and come to terms with fellow nation-states. Loveman writes about the patron state that it "risks little or no physical loss, and is cushioned from any decline in international prestige or moral standing."<sup>124</sup> His description might be more accurate ascribed to a clandestine program in a non-bordering nation, but the basic benefits noted by maintaining a degree of isolation from the conflict versus engaging in traditional warfare remain.

---

<sup>121</sup> Ibid., 92-95.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid., 95-100.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid., 95.

<sup>124</sup> Loveman, "Assessing the phenomenon of proxy intervention," 33.

Clandestine programs are even more useful, as they allow a nation to pursue its interests while also permitting ‘plausible deniability,’<sup>125</sup> an important asset in maintaining diplomatic relations.

Whether the support is political, financial, military, material, training, or even the contribution of a safe haven, the state providing the support is usually more in control than the non-state actor receiving it.<sup>126</sup> As nation-states are primarily motivated by realpolitik and their personal interests, the use of proxies represents a means to an end. If that end either proves too costly (financial or otherwise), or can be efficiently achieved through other means, states will not hesitate to switch their tactics. This is the inherently unreliable nature of state support Byman mentions.<sup>127</sup> Non-state armed groups welcome an alliance of convenience with states as they often need it to survive, let alone thrive. Record writes about how external assistance is necessary for an insurgent group to succeed, but that no amount of assistance will make up for what he terms a lack of intangibles in a fighting force.<sup>128</sup> Ultimately though, proxies are being used as pawns in a larger battle and are readily disposed of at a moment’s notice, regardless of intangibles or domestic success. Thus proxy wars, especially in today’s security environment, are very fluid operations, as will be demonstrated in the case of Somalia.

## SECTION IV – ETHIOPIAN INTERESTS

### Concerns regarding Somalia

---

To understand the reasons for the proxy war in Somalia, it must be explained as to why Somalia is so important to Ethiopia in the first place, and how Eritrea has capitalized on these insecurities.

Ethiopia has a number of core security interests regarding the Somali state that it believes, based on

---

<sup>125</sup> Shultz, *The Soviet Union and Revolutionary Warfare*, 44.

<sup>126</sup> Byman et al., *Trends in Outside Support for Insurgent Movements*, 101.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, 40.

<sup>128</sup> Record considers intangibles to consist of items such as political will, strategy, morale, organization, or leadership - Record, “External Assistance: Enabler of Insurgent Success,” 48.

history, rhetoric, and action, are compromised by the establishment of a radical Islamic government in Mogadishu. The first stems from insecurities concerning its large, ethnically Somali Ogaden region. From time to time the idea of a 'Greater Somalia,' linking all territories inhabited by ethnic Somalis, has risen as a force in Somali nationalist politics.<sup>129</sup> This fear of Somali irredentism is well founded in history; the nations have officially gone to war three times since independence over territorial claims, not to mention countless skirmishes. The last was the Cold War inspired Ogaden war of 1977-78, which proved to be utterly disastrous for the Somali side, once the Soviet Union stepped in to support Ethiopia.<sup>130</sup> However, the losses to Ethiopia were great enough for the nation to wish to avoid a similar conflict again. The means of preventing a war with Somalia over this territory has led to an offensive policy of preventing such ideas from the very start, within Somalia itself. This has given Ethiopia a major role in Somali politics, especially since the collapse of the central government in 1991, to ensure that any emerging political forces are not in direct opposition to its core interests. Ethiopia has intervened on behalf of this principle in the past, and it continues to drive its Somali policy.

Islamist groups have often played upon this threat of a 'Greater Somalia,' to the detriment of Ethiopia. For example, Ethiopia suffered from a spate of assassination attempts and bombings in its two largest cities from 1995-96. In Dire Dawa in May 1995 a grenade attack on a market killed fifteen people, while in 1996 hotel blasts in Addis Abba and Dire Dawa took the lives of seven others.<sup>131</sup> A government minister was also shot, but survived. These terrorist attacks gave Ethiopia its first brush with Islamic fundamentalism. The Al-Itihaad al-Islamiya (AIAI), a radical Islamist group active throughout the 1990's in Somalia, had set up an Ethiopian branch with an eye towards reclaiming the Ogaden region

---

<sup>129</sup> The five stars on the Somali national flag refer to the five Somali inhabited regions that would need to be united to produce 'Greater Somalia.' Such irredentism would include the Djibouti and Northeastern province of Kenya, in addition to the Ogaden region of Ethiopia and modern day central and northern Somalia - Cabdisalaam M. Ciisa-Salwe and HAAN Associates, *Cold War Fallout*, 60.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid., 108.

<sup>131</sup> *Somalia's Islamists*, 9.

and took responsibility for the campaign of violence. Ethiopian security forces had been monitoring its Somali border closely throughout the decade, often intercepting AIAI militants. Yet in retaliation for the attack Ethiopia went further, striking at AIAI bases on Somali soil in August of 1996 and again in January of 1997.<sup>132</sup> The AIAI was not well equipped to survive such an onslaught, and the movement quickly dissipated after that, never rising to be an equivalent force again.<sup>133</sup> Ethiopia demonstrated the depths of intentions to protect its territorial integrity by engaging and defeating militant forces within Somalia, a means they have often resorted to subsequently.

Such fears resurfaced during the reign of the Islamic Courts Union (ICU) in the mid 2000's. Ethiopia was opposed to the Islamist faction taking power in Mogadishu, lending its support, along with the United States, to the Alliance for the Restoration of Peace and Counter-terrorism (ARPCT), a grouping of various warlords and businessmen.<sup>134</sup> Zenawi considered the ICU to be largely an AIAI run operation. He proclaimed that "the new leadership of the Union of the Courts is dominated by this particular group [AIAI] . . . now the direct threat posed to Ethiopia by the dominance of the Islamic Courts by Al-Itihaad is obvious."<sup>135</sup> The ICU did little to assuage Ethiopian fears. Hassan Aweys, a prominent leader of the ICU at the time and former AIAI head, was quoted in June of 2006 as saying "the Ogaden region is a Somali region and part of Somalia . . . I hope that one day that region will be part of Somalia," implying potential action to make it so.<sup>136</sup> Aweys went further in another interview a month later, declaring that "we will leave no stone unturned to integrate our Somali brothers in Kenya and Ethiopia and restore their freedom to live with their ancestors in Somalia."<sup>137</sup>

---

<sup>132</sup> Ibid.

<sup>133</sup> *Beyond the Fragile Peace Between Ethiopia and Eritrea: Averting New War*, 14.

<sup>134</sup> "Annan: U.S. wrong to support warlords in Somalia."

<sup>135</sup> *Can the Somali Crisis Be Contained?*, 20-21.

<sup>136</sup> *Somalia: The Tough Part Is Ahead*, 5.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid.

The idea of a 'Greater Somalia' was again being held up by Islamist extremists based on Somali territory. Through history, Aweys knew how such talk would be viewed by the Ethiopian leadership, and some suggest the ICU was goading an Ethiopian invasion to unify the movement around a common enemy.<sup>138</sup> To that effect the ICU struck at the core of Ethiopian insecurity by consistently making claims to Ogaden territory, declaring jihad on Ethiopia,<sup>139</sup> hosting the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) and Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF), and by receiving support from Eritrea.<sup>140</sup> All of this was antithetical to Ethiopian interests, and created the potentially desired effect. Ethiopia invaded in December 2006, easily dispelling the ICU in another victory against Islamic fundamentalism in Somalia. Yet, due to the inability of the African Union to come up with peacekeeping troops in the aftermath, Ethiopia was forced to remain in Somali territory for another two years,<sup>141</sup> which in turn helped achieve the Islamists desired goals by engendering a hardline campaign of resistance.

As the ICU touched upon, Ethiopia is also worried of any government in Somalia serving as a host and providing support to the two main violent opposition groups in its eastern regions, the OLF and ONLF. Most analysts concur that the OLF is presently a spent force, and a shell of what it used to be despite Ethiopia's continuing obsession with the movement.<sup>142</sup> However, the ONLF is still active as an ethnic Somali based resistance organization. Ethiopia wants to avoid a situation whereby movements in Somalia team up with the ONLF, creating a stronger anti-Addis Abba alliance. This is something Eritrea has been pursuing, with degrees of success. Eritrea facilitated links between the ONLF, OLF, and the ICU, evidenced by support, sanctuary, and joint operations.<sup>143</sup> The strength the ONLF derived from these relationships was evident when it launched an audacious attack on an Ogaden based Chinese run

---

<sup>138</sup> Menkhaus, "Somalia," 225.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid.

<sup>140</sup> Menkhaus, "Governance without Government in Somalia: Spoilers, State Building, and the Politics of Coping," 89.

<sup>141</sup> Menkhaus, "Somalia," 226.

<sup>142</sup> "Author interview with a regional expert."

<sup>143</sup> *Somalia: The Tough Part Is Ahead*, 5-6.

oil installation in 2007, killing seventy-four workers.<sup>144</sup> This prompted a severe crackdown from Addis Abba, leading to a sealing off of the Ogaden region to the outside world, and causing concerns as to serious government abuse and a budding humanitarian crisis.<sup>145</sup> In Ethiopia's security calculus it always views machinations in Somalia within the lens of the ONLF and OLF, even when those movements have not been involved. It is natural for groups on both sides of the border to cooperate against a common enemy, and that clearly has occurred. The use of Somali territory as a safe haven is an especially dangerous situation for the Ethiopian central government, as it gives opposition groups the ability to engage in close contact with the people of their aggrieved territories. Ethiopia endeavors to prevent such a situation from flourishing, and this is another major security interest that drives its Somali policies.

In other respects, Ethiopia has strived to ensure that any regime in Somalia will not only avoid being antithetical to its interests, but is also even pliant to some degree. Ethiopia has traditionally played a large role in the formation of governance movements in Somalia since 1991, for better and worse. Its interests are considered so imperative that it is often said without Ethiopia's approval no government will be able to succeed in Somalia.<sup>146</sup> This was evident when Ethiopia opposed the precursor to the TFG, the Transitional National Government (TNG) in the early 2000's.<sup>147</sup> Ironically at this time Eritrea was supporting central government rule in Somalia, while Ethiopia was bolstering various warlords, clans, and factions united in their opposition to the TNG. Ethiopia even went so far as to physically maintain troops in Somalia during this period, ostensibly in search of AIAI members.<sup>148</sup> Regardless, Ethiopia was willing to resort to undermining a national government project not firmly rooted within its core interests. This lesson was learned and incorporated during the creation of the

---

<sup>144</sup> "Scores die in Ethiopia oil attack."

<sup>145</sup> Human Rights Watch, *Ogaden*, 3.

<sup>146</sup> Menkhaus, *Somalia After the Ethiopian Occupation*, 5.

<sup>147</sup> Holzer and Eliot, "The 'Invention' of Terrorism in Somalia: paradigms and policy in U.S. foreign relations," 218.

<sup>148</sup> *Report of the Monitoring Group and the Panel of Experts on Somalia - 25 March 2003*, 21.

TFG, which Ethiopia made sure was initially dominated by members of Somalia's friendly Hawiye clan,<sup>149</sup> and was less imbued with a sympathetic attitude towards Islamist groups.<sup>150</sup>

Some, mainly embittered Somalis and Eritreans, surmise stories like the one above prove it is in Ethiopia's interests to maintain fragmentation and disunity in Somalia, to prevent the formation of a strong central state which could challenge Ethiopia's dominance in the region.<sup>151</sup> However, Ethiopia's involvement and support towards the TFG since its inception in 2003 has been constant, and serves as a vision for how Ethiopia sees the future of its coastal neighbor. The 2006 invasion in support of the TFG was very costly for Ethiopia in terms of lives lost, money, and reputation, a decision not taken lightly. Considering the consistent threat emanating from a fragmented Somalia, Ethiopia would very much like to see some stability on its eastern flank, so it could refocus on its heavily militarized and disputed northern one. Stability and predictability are qualities Addis Abba would like to see taking root in Somalia.<sup>152</sup> The Ethiopian government's 2004 *Foreign Policy, Security Policy, and Strategy* report stated that "the factionalization of Somalia has allowed anti-peace and extremists elements to become strong, posing a threat to Ethiopia."<sup>153</sup> Thus Addis Abba realizes the costs that come with a divided, lawless Somalia. Nevertheless, if the choice comes down simply between a strong radical Islamist state or anarchic chaos, Ethiopia will undoubtedly choose the latter, as it views the former contrary to its interests.<sup>154</sup>

A final worry for Meles Zenawi and his regime is more long term in nature. The increase in radicalized political Islam in Somalia has occurred quite rapidly, especially for a country traditionally more inclined with Sufi practices and marked by opposition to extreme Wahhabists beliefs. Yet

---

<sup>149</sup> *Can the Somali Crisis Be Contained?*, i.

<sup>150</sup> Morrison, "Somalia's and Sudan's race to the fore in Africa," 197.

<sup>151</sup> *Somalia: The Tough Part Is Ahead*, 4.

<sup>152</sup> Abbink, "E-mail interview."

<sup>153</sup> Dagne, *Somalia: Current Conditions and Prospects for a Lasting Peace*, 19.

<sup>154</sup> Menkhaus, "Introduction," 9.

Wahhabism has made great inroads in the region since its introduction in the 1970's, mostly via Saudi Arabia.<sup>155</sup> In less than four decades it has risen to become a major political force to be reckoned with in much of the nation. Ethiopia has traditionally been characterized as a Christian nation throughout its long history, and often this has been a central defining point of its identity. Nonetheless, Ethiopia's predominance of Christianity within its own borders has been diminishing in recent decades, and Muslims current make up 50% of the population.<sup>156</sup> The Ethiopian leadership is extremely wary of such radicalization taking place amongst its own Muslim populations.<sup>157</sup> The spillover threat from Somalia is quite real for Addis Abba and is another factor cementing their absolute resistance, backed up by military action, towards the imposition of an extremist Islamist regime in Mogadishu.

Ethiopian policy is formed with these core interests in mind. This has led to heavy support for the TFG, chronicled below. Ethiopia also attempts to create a buffer area, supplying arms to clans along its Somali border in hopes that they can contain militant influences from marching westward.<sup>158</sup> Addis Abba has also been known to sponsor warlords that are antithetical to the Islamist factions. Eritrea on the other hand, is fully aware of the Ethiopian security concerns regarding Somalia, and has endeavored to exploit the situation. Support to various Islamists groups, the ONLF, and OLF have been high in the past decade since the cessation of outright conflict with Ethiopia. The frustration of achieving objectives on the battlefield has led Eritrea to pursue alternative means of weakening Ethiopia, preying on its insecurities. The increased involvement spiked during the Ethiopian occupation of Somalia, due to Eritrea's desire to bleed its larger neighbor as much as possible. This has been the central underlying rationale fueling the decade of proxy conflict in Somalia. Eritrea was not prepared to directly confront Ethiopia again after its two rounds of battle loses, but as the stalemate over the border was left

---

<sup>155</sup> *Somalia's Divided Islamists*, 3.

<sup>156</sup> Kagwanja, "Counter-terrorism in the Horn of Africa," 75.

<sup>157</sup> *Somalia: The Tough Part Is Ahead*, 4.

<sup>158</sup> Bruton, *Somalia A New Approach*, 31.



unresolved to Ethiopia's benefit, the resilient nation strived to negatively affect Ethiopia's security calculations elsewhere in the failed chaos that is Somalia.

## SECTION V – FOUR PHASES OF PROXY WAR

### Entanglements in Somalia (Phase I)

---

The Ethiopian-Eritrean proxy war in Somalia has undergone four significant iterations since its ascent in the late 1990's during the midst of their border war. Much of this has come in violation of U.N. Security Council Resolution 733, which established a complete arms embargo on Somalia, ongoing since 1992.<sup>159</sup> A December 2006 Security Council Resolution partially lifted that embargo for the purposes of authorizing an IGAD/AU peace mission, but demanded that "states that border Somalia would not deploy troops," an explicit reference to Ethiopia's planned December invasion.<sup>160</sup> Undoubtedly, both nations have consistently undermined the weak embargo regime, a fact Eritrea has repeatedly made clear to the U.N. Monitoring Group on Somalia, which it feels unfairly targets itself.<sup>161</sup> The outgrowth of their deteriorated relations has been transferred to the conflict in Somalia, providing a new arena for competition. It could be argued that Ethiopia's actions have proved far more devastating to Somali security in the long run, since the dynamics of the current round of chaos stem in large part from Ethiopia's 2006 invasion and occupation, which precipitated the conclusion of the first bout of relatively united peace in Mogadishu in sixteen years.<sup>162</sup> Despite such realities, Eritrea is the only country to have been formally sanctioned over their role in Somalia, pursuant to UNSC Resolution 1907.<sup>163</sup> As a result,

---

<sup>159</sup> Resolution 733.

<sup>160</sup> Resolution 1725.

<sup>161</sup> For more on information to this point see the Eritrean government responses to the U.N. Monitoring Group on Somalia, specifically in the appendixes of the May 2006, November 2006, July 2007, April 2008, and March 2010 reports.

<sup>162</sup> Barnes and Hassan, *The Rise and Fall of Mogadishu's Islamic Courts*, 4.

<sup>163</sup> United Nations Security Council, "Resolution 1907."

the nation has been subject to an arms embargo, while certain Eritrean individuals have been affected by asset freezes and a travel ban.<sup>164</sup> A host of other nations have also been involved, but much of this has come through Eritrea or Ethiopia, solidifying their preeminent position amongst the range of external actors with an interest in internal Somali politics.

The first of four phases in the proxy war took place from the late 1990's until 2006, with involvement deepening during and after the border war. This stage conformed to the classic Cold War style proxy model, with Ethiopia and Eritrea taking the unfinished business of their border dispute to Somalia, but avoiding direct confrontations between their national forces (even as forces clashed overtly in the north until 2000). Ethiopia initially lent most of its support to longtime allied warlords opposed to the TNG, in particular Abdullahi Yusuf Ahmed of Puntland<sup>165</sup> and Mohamed Dheere, among others. A convoy to Yusuf from Ethiopia of four trucks in March of 2002 consisted of 19 B-10 anti-tank guns, 8 DSHK machine guns, 55 PKM machine guns, 47 AK-48 rifles, 350 G-3 rifles, and 10 P-9 pistols, all replete with ammunition.<sup>166</sup> In April and June later that year, Ethiopia provided an additional nine trucks equipped with anti-aircraft guns, assault rifles, heavy machine guns, 12 mortars, M30 artillery pieces, mortar bombs and ammunition.<sup>167</sup> These narratives provide, at best, just a small snapshot of activity. Ethiopia also played a heavy role in sponsoring the creation of the Somalia Reconciliation and Restoration Council (SRRC) in March of 2001.<sup>168</sup> The SRRC was made up of assorted warlords and clan

---

<sup>164</sup> "UN imposes sanctions on Eritrea."

<sup>165</sup> Yusuf later became the first president of the TFG, with heavy Ethiopian support for the process

<sup>166</sup> *Report of the Monitoring Group and the Panel of Experts on Somalia - 25 March 2003*, 23.

<sup>167</sup> *Report of the Monitoring Group and the Panel of Experts on Somalia - 3 July 2002*, 21.

<sup>168</sup> *Report of the Monitoring Group and the Panel of Experts on Somalia - 25 March 2003*, 21.

leaders opposed to the TNG and heavily armed by Ethiopia; it would serve as Ethiopia's main conduit of support until the creation and its absorption into the TFG in 2004.<sup>169</sup>

Eritrea was also active in this time period, throwing much of its support behind Hussein Mohamed Aideed, until he switched sides to work for Ethiopia. Ironically, Eritrea was also a backer of the TNG, a stunning reversal of the current situation. Eritrea's bolstering of central government rule in Somalia is a testament to the lack of true security interests it holds in the country, but reveals that its actions are dictated more by whichever group is in opposition to Ethiopia. Within Byman's paradigm, the regime in Asmara was clearly motivated by a desire to destabilize its neighbors. Eritrea also went a step further, getting Aideed's support to allow the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) to operate from bases in Somalia and for weapon transfers through him.<sup>170</sup> This was emblematic of Eritrea's obsession with Addis Abba dissident groups, whom they hoped could strike deep within Ethiopian territory to shake their sense of internal security. This is a marked escalation of war by proxy, but considering that most activity still took place on Somali soil and went through factions in the country rather than directly into Ethiopia, it maintains form within the classic model, albeit one that is heavily localized. Shipments to Aideed onwards for the OLF began in 1999, as its war with Ethiopia was still hot. Eritrea transferred heavy machine guns, 40 anti-aircraft guns, 4 APC's, and numerous assault rifles in the first half of 1999.<sup>171</sup> Additionally, Eritrea escorted 300 OLF fighters into Somalia in May 1999, making good on its hopes to draw down Ethiopian forces in a region far away from their shared border.<sup>172</sup>

This situation continued, although there was a turnaround in the role of the recipients. Ethiopia threw its weight behind the formation of the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) in 2004, ending its

---

<sup>169</sup> The establishment of the Eritrean backed formation of the Alliance for the Re-liberation of Somalia (ARS) was eerily reminiscent of this process, as Eritrea was putting together a group of warlords opposed to central government rule in Somalia, a reversal of this situation just seven years later

<sup>170</sup> *Report of the Monitoring Group and the Panel of Experts on Somalia - 25 March 2003*, 24.

<sup>171</sup> *Report of the Monitoring Group and the Panel of Experts on Somalia - 3 July 2002*, 20.

<sup>172</sup> *Report of the Monitoring Group and the Panel of Experts on Somalia - 25 March 2003*, 25.

opposition to central government rule. Eritrea predictably did the opposite. It continued to support the OLF and added the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF) to its repertoire as well, but after Aidede's betrayal Eritrea was forced to go a different route, and began courting the Somali Islamist movement. In the early 2000's the U.N. Monitoring Group on Somalia began to cite arms embargo violations by "another state in the region."<sup>173</sup> The state was left nameless due to the fact that the investigation was ongoing, but was later revealed to be Eritrea.<sup>174</sup> Eritrea was accused of having links with Sheik Hassan Dahir Aweys, who is on the U.S. terrorism sanction list.<sup>175</sup> Aweys had been the leader of the AIAI, considered to be "the 'mother' of contemporary Islamic organizations in Somalia,"<sup>176</sup> since many Islamist leaders active today participated in some form or another in the organization. Thus, despite their own recent struggles with Islamic extremism (in the form of the EIJ), Eritrea was fully prepared to cooperate with similarly radical groups in other nations for the purposes of geopolitical gains at Ethiopia's expense. This 'the enemy of my enemy is my friend' approach has characterized Eritrean foreign policy formulation throughout its short history, and the fact that they can enter into alliances with a group whose ideology they strenuously oppose elsewhere demonstrates the flexibility and reach of such thinking. These relationships are means to an end, and if Afewerki believes the group in question can help reach his end, then there is little consideration of other details.

Eritrean arms exports to Somalia increased dramatically from 2005 to 2006, around the same time its disruptions to the UNMEE border patrol were also increasing. These actions signified a frustration with the international community, and the pursuit of alternative means to affect regional politics in the Horn of Africa. The 2006 Somalia Monitoring Group report is particularly full of detailed violations, noting at least "28 separate consignments of arms, ammunition, and military equipment," in

---

<sup>173</sup> *Report of the Monitoring Group and the Panel of Experts on Somalia - 4 October 2005*, 15.

<sup>174</sup> *Report of the Monitoring Group and the Panel of Experts on Somalia - 4 May 2006*, 10.

<sup>175</sup> Dagne, *Somalia: Current Conditions and Prospects for a Lasting Peace*, 3.

<sup>176</sup> Hoehne, *Counter-terrorism in Somalia: How external interference helped to produce militant Islamism*, 12.

addition to “providing troops and training to the ICU in Somalia.”<sup>177</sup> In 2005, Eritrea had promised to match what the TFG was receiving from other countries in terms of arms donations to the Islamic opposition,<sup>178</sup> but by 2006 they were outstripping that pace. The bulk of this occurred via aircraft transfers or dhow shipments. The varied weaponry provided included AK-47 assault rifles, PKM machine guns, anti-aircraft guns, RPG’s, anti-tank mines, F1 hand grenades, M72-series lightweight anti-armor weapons, 82 mm mortars, DShks, B-10 anti-tank guns, Browning .30-calibre machine guns, various rifles, howitzers, and surface-to-air missiles among others. Along with all that came ammunition, foodstuffs, water supplies, medicines, and even uniforms.<sup>179</sup>

This impressive cache was not the extent of involvement, Eritrea was also providing ground troops and military trainings. In July 2006, five hundred personnel from Eritrea’s military and Ethiopian dissident groups arrived in Mogadishu to be transported further south for the purposes of a setting up a military base and training camps, to be frequented by locals and foreigners alike.<sup>180</sup> An added 2,000 Eritrean troops arrived in August to be deployed on behalf of the ICU,<sup>181</sup> despite the fact that some analysts have claimed this number largely overestimated.<sup>182 183</sup> This buildup was changing the nature of the proxy war to one of more direct involvement. Yet the presence of Eritrean troops in Somalia is a highly debated topic, and the slight impact they had continued to keep the war one by proxy, for the most part. Training was also a key component of the support program. After a meeting of senior Eritrean military officials, other foreigners, and ICU leaders in July 2006, a decision was made to begin a

---

<sup>177</sup> *Report of the Monitoring Group and the Panel of Experts on Somalia - 22 November 2006*, 11.

<sup>178</sup> *Report of the Monitoring Group and the Panel of Experts on Somalia - 4 October 2005*, 16.

<sup>179</sup> *Report of the Monitoring Group and the Panel of Experts on Somalia - 22 November 2006*, 11-14.

<sup>180</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>181</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>182</sup> No Eritrean troops were found in the aftermath of the December 2006 Ethiopian invasion and many claim that as evidence that the number put forth by the U.N. Monitoring Group was highly exaggerated - *Somalia: The Tough Part Is Ahead*, 6.

<sup>183</sup> Lyons, “The Ethiopia–Eritrea Conflict and the Search for Peace in the Horn of Africa,” 174.

training program for 3,800 militants, with Eritrea supplying instructors.<sup>184</sup> These actions did not only take place in Somalia however. Two hundred militants were flown to Eritrea to receive training in guerilla warfare in July 2006, and an additional three hundred arrived later to learn how to effectively use the rockets and surface-to-air missiles Eritrea had been providing.<sup>185</sup> These personnel investments were becoming a significant portion of Eritrean assistance, at a time when Ethiopia was doing the same.

At this point Eritrea was an arms dealer, professional trainer, and even on the ground military supporter to the ICU, encompassing Byman's minor and valuable forms of support, but also some critical measures. In addition, other nations were accused, namely Libya, Egypt, Djibouti, and some unnamed Middle Eastern countries, of using Eritrea as a conduit and platform to bolster the ICU,<sup>186</sup> though their support was not as expansive as what Eritrea provided on its own. However, as the ICU was merely a means to an end, the end being a scenario detrimental to Ethiopia's core security interests, Eritrea wanted to go one step further. As a supporter of both the ICU in Somalia and the OLF and ONLF in Ethiopia, Eritrea sought to bring the various movements together, and deepen links between them. All three ostensibly had a common enemy in the regime in Addis Abba. Eritrea facilitated and presided over meetings with Hassan Aweys and the ONLF/OLF in May 2005, validating the possibility of Ethiopia's greatest fear (local insurgents groups pairing up with Somali radicals).<sup>187</sup> Also that month 270 ONLF fighters who had been residing in Eritrea were flown into Somalia, establishing a ground presence.<sup>188</sup>

During this time Eritrea had an envoy posted in Mogadishu, Elias Haite Talaze, who the U.N. wrote was "instrumental in developing good cooperation between the militants and [Ethiopian]

---

<sup>184</sup> *Report of the Monitoring Group and the Panel of Experts on Somalia - 22 November 2006*, 13.

<sup>185</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>186</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>187</sup> *Report of the Monitoring Group and the Panel of Experts on Somalia - 4 October 2005*, 16.

<sup>188</sup> *Ibid.*

dissident ethnic groups.”<sup>189</sup> Supplies for the ONLF in Ethiopia also went through Somali territory. For example in July of 2006, 160 ONLF fighters along with a consignment of weaponry passed into Ethiopia from the Galgaduud region of Somalia; they had been escorted by 70 members of the ICU,<sup>190</sup> evidence of just the type of cooperation and links Eritrea was seeking to realize and Ethiopia dreaded. By becoming more involved in Somalia, Eritrea was also becoming more effective in providing succor to dissident factions in Ethiopia’s susceptible eastern regions, a key part of the Eritrean platform.

Ethiopia on the other side was strongly supporting its new ally, the TFG. In preparation for a major battle around Baidoa in 2005, TFG forces “were supplied with a steady flow of arms from Ethiopia.”<sup>191</sup> Lorries arrived carrying AK-47 rifles, RPG’s, ammunition, and explosives, and trainings by the Ethiopian military were conducted.<sup>192</sup> Additional lorries were intended for Mohameed Dheere, a warlord in the middle Shabelle region now aligned with the TFG.<sup>193</sup> A 2006 Monitoring Group report went further, detailing Ethiopian shipments in January of that year of “2,000 AK-47s, 100 PKMs, 1,500 G3s, 100 RPG launchers, 10 DShKs, 10 SKUs and landmines,” plus ammunition, and a further ten tons of similar weaponry in March.<sup>194</sup> In the buildup to its direct intervention, Ethiopia actively recruited and trained troops to supplement TFG forces, instructing at least 400 future fighters.<sup>195</sup> In addition, Ethiopia stepped up its support to various border clans. It distributed its usual assortment of assault rifles, anti-tank landmines, PKM’s, RPG’s, and hand grenades to the Ujejeen, Galje’el, Dhulbahante, and Leelkase

---

<sup>189</sup> *Report of the Monitoring Group and the Panel of Experts on Somalia - 4 May 2006*, 12.

<sup>190</sup> *Report of the Monitoring Group and the Panel of Experts on Somalia - 22 November 2006*, 14.

<sup>191</sup> *Report of the Monitoring Group and the Panel of Experts on Somalia - 4 October 2005*, 14.

<sup>192</sup> *Ibid.*, 14-15.

<sup>193</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

<sup>194</sup> *Report of the Monitoring Group and the Panel of Experts on Somalia - 4 May 2006*, 13.

<sup>195</sup> *Report of the Monitoring Group and the Panel of Experts on Somalia - 22 November 2006*, 18.

clans, while also engaging in intelligence gathering.<sup>196</sup> Shipments to the warlord Dheere continued while two other prominent warlords, Mohamed Qanyare and Abdi Qeybdiid, also received weapons.<sup>197</sup>

Ethiopia demonstrated a pattern of violations in regards to the Somali arms embargo, with consistent consignments of arms, mostly via road, to various warlords, clans, and the TFG prior to its direct intervention. These violations were time and time again noted by the Monitoring Group, without repercussion. In fact, both nations were heavily involved in terms of minor, valuable, and critical forms of support, but the majority of action during this period (weaponry and military trainings) fell into the valuable category. Yet the fact that Ethiopia felt the need for direct military intervention demonstrated that its arms shipments were not reaping the full extent of benefits intended, and that Eritrean policy was enjoying a degree of success.

### **Invasion and Occupation (Phase II)**

---

The December 2006 invasion heralded a new phase in the proxy war. No longer did the classic model fit with both countries on the sidelines. Addis Abba's explicit intervention provided a critical means of support and was motivated by the desire for regime change in Mogadishu. It also exposed Ethiopian forces to direct attack from Eritrean proxies, giving Eritrea an opportunity to bleed Ethiopia, an opportunity Ethiopia did not have with regards to Eritrea. This became a one sided proxy affair, with Eritrea fighting against an occupying nation in a neighboring country. This is more of a hybrid situation, still marked by the involvement of a third country battlefield. That third country just so happened to be occupied by the other opponent, cutting the middle man out in its relationship from proxy to direct

---

<sup>196</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

<sup>197</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.



intervention. Such a situation is akin to certain contexts of the world today, such as Iran's confrontations by proxy of U.S./NATO occupying forces Afghanistan.<sup>198</sup>

Ethiopia's invasion was considered to be a major breach of the arms embargo. The fact that the United Nations Security Council, while not authorizing the operation, never lodged a formal complaint for such a massive undertaking demonstrates the depths of support Ethiopia had from major world powers, and the limited appeal of the ICU on the international stage. The United States in particular was a keen advocate for such a move, especially in the aftermath of the U.S. backed ARPCT's quick defeat at the hands of the Islamists. The invasion was not undertaken at the behest of the United States, but they came on board once they realized the level of Ethiopian seriousness to dispel the ICU.<sup>199</sup> A leaked memo from a June 2006 meeting between Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Jendayi Frazer and a representative of the UNMEE mission discussed potential Ethiopian reactions, stating that "any Ethiopian action in Somalia would have Washington's blessing."<sup>200</sup> This was evident when the United States proposed a new resolution at the Security Council directly before the Ethiopian incursion in early December 2006, authorizing an international security presence to Somalia. While the final, debated version including a provision stating that nations bordering Somalia could not make up any of the troop contingents for the mission, the fact that the United States went to such lengths to attempt to legitimize Ethiopia's actions prior to intervention signaled a so-called 'green light' to the regime in Addis Abba.<sup>201</sup> The point to underline here is the hypocrisy that Eritrea so often invokes in its defense, that Ethiopia's actions have not been subject to the same level of scrutiny as Eritrea's, is not far off from the truth.

The Ethiopian invasion heralded the demise of the ICU and Eritrea's main Somali partner. In the aftermath of these events Eritrea was prepared to take on another role, that of political coordinator.

---

<sup>198</sup> "UK anger as 'Iranian arms' seized."

<sup>199</sup> Hoehne, *Counter-terrorism in Somalia: How external interference helped to produce militant Islamism*, 20.

<sup>200</sup> Ennifar, "Meeting with U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs," 4.

<sup>201</sup> *Somalia: The Tough Part Is Ahead*, 7.

The ICU's fall from short-lived rule in Mogadishu precipitated the collapse of the organization into multiple factions. The youth wing, known as Al-Shabaab, led the two year long insurgency against the Ethiopian occupation. Other prominent leaders dissipated in the chaos; Hassan Aweys did not resurface until early 2007 in Asmara. As the radical Islamists were in the process of reorganizing themselves, Eritrea stepped in to play a leading role in the creation of the Alliance for the Restoration of Somalia (ARS). Formed in Asmara in September 2007, the movement consisted of mostly former ICU members opposed to the TFG. Eritrea's decisive political role is exemplified by their insistence on certain individuals to take up key positions within the new organization. Specifically the posts of Secretary of Military Affairs, Foreign Secretary, and Finance Secretary were filled by individuals Eritrea demanded, to the chagrin of many ARS leaders.<sup>202</sup> The ability to push through their desired appointments, even when in clear opposition to certain ARS principals, displayed the power of Eritrean sponsorship and influence over the nascent resistance organization. Much of this was most likely due to heavy Eritrean financial sponsorship, but it reflected how invested the Afewerki regime was in the ARS and who, at least initially, was calling the shots.

Eritrea began significant financial support with the formation of the ARS, and this slowly increased to take over other means of assistance. By 2008 Eritrea was paying the ARS \$200,000 to 500,000 each month,<sup>203</sup> not an insignificant sum for a nation that relies on remittances for 25-30% of its GDP.<sup>204</sup> Often the cash flowed through Eritrean embassies to its final destination, rather than direct transaction. In a nine month span in 2008, it was estimated that \$1.6 million made its way from the

---

<sup>202</sup> *Report of the Monitoring Group and the Panel of Experts on Somalia - 10 March 2010, 22.*

<sup>203</sup> *Report of the Monitoring Group and the Panel of Experts on Somalia - 10 December 2008, 26.*

<sup>204</sup> After Somalia, that is the highest proportion of reliance on remittances in the world. There are over one million Eritreans living abroad, and Asmara requires them to pay 2% of their annual revenues (raised to 10% during the war) to the central government in order to be able to return for visits and avoid harassment of local relatives - Jopson, "Inside the insular and secretive Eritrea."

Eritrean embassy to opposition groups just from Kenya itself.<sup>205</sup> Eritrean intelligence services also began establishing direct links with forces outside the ARS, reaching out to Al-Shabaab and the Ras Kamboni Brigade. These groups received \$40,000 to \$50,000 per month in addition to extra funds available for bigger operations.<sup>206</sup> This implied that Eritrea was directly implicated in encouraging attacks, such as on TFG forces or suicide missions, rather than simply providing funds to organizations that engaged in such activities. There is a subtle difference, but the way Eritrea incentivized increased attacks certainly stoked instability further. Another cynical impetus behind the switch to predominantly providing cash over weapons was that Somalia was already awash in easily acquired weaponry, while hard currency “entices them [TFG and Ethiopian forces] to sell their weapons, ammunitions, and uniforms, or to defect entirely.”<sup>207</sup> Hence cash spoke more powerfully than weapons ever did, and thus is listed as a critical rather than valuable form of support by Byman. Both stimulate attacks against forces seen as enemies, but money also undermined vulnerable sections of the opposing forces it was sent to attack.

From 2007 until April 2009 Eritrea played host to the ARS, while the leadership directed operations within Somalia. Asmara also facilitated the introduction of foreign fighters to the Somali scene. In the late months of 2007, 120 fighters spent time training in Eritrea from places diverse as Pakistan, Zanzibar, and the Comoros, only to return to Somalia.<sup>208</sup> However, Eritrea’s stewardship was unable to prevent the ARS from splintering when a prominent former ICU leader, Sheikh Sharif, broke with the Asmara based faction. Sharif, a more moderate leader, was exiled in Djibouti at the time, and took his group in May 2008 to begin talks with the TFG. A peace agreement ensued in which Sharif and his faction became part of the TFG, and agreed to an international stabilization force in order to ensure

---

<sup>205</sup> *Report of the Monitoring Group and the Panel of Experts on Somalia - 10 December 2008*, 26.

<sup>206</sup> *Report of the Monitoring Group and the Panel of Experts on Somalia - 10 March 2010*, 23.

<sup>207</sup> *Report of the Monitoring Group and the Panel of Experts on Somalia - 10 December 2008*, 26.

<sup>208</sup> *Report of the Monitoring Group and the Panel of Experts on Somalia - 24 April 2008*, 21.

the departure of Ethiopian troops from Somali soil.<sup>209</sup> The ARS divided over this issue, as the more radical Asmara based faction was highly opposed to any sort of discussions with a TFG organization it viewed as anti-Islamic and an illegitimate stooge of Ethiopia and the United States. In the end Sharif had enough support to become President of the TFG, while Aweys remained in Asmara, his faction having shed its moderate wing and becoming more radicalized in the process. The two former allies now led two of the major opposing blocs, with two opposing external benefactors, in the chaos that was Somalia.

### **Withdrawal (Phase III)**

---

The agreement between the ARS-Djibouti and TFG paved the way for the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) to take over and Ethiopia to withdraw in January of 2009. Dynamics returned to the first phase, resembling a traditional Cold War proxy battle. Despite still being a party to the African Union (AU) at this point, Eritrea continued to support groups opposed to the TFG, and engaged in combat with AMISOM. The AU mission however now put the eyes of the entire continent on the conflict, and arms violations took on an increased importance as they did not just affect Somalia, but also AMISOM's troop contributing countries.<sup>210</sup> Eritrea would finally pay for such violations at the end of the year, but for a brief time the dynamics of a classic proxy war had returned, albeit with an increased regional organization presence.

After its pullout Ethiopia began supporting the Ahlu Sunna Wal Jama'a (ASWJ), a Sufi Islamist group opposed to the spread of Wahhabi beliefs in Somalia.<sup>211</sup> Given the common enemy, the ASWJ and TFG signed cooperation agreements on June 21<sup>st</sup>, 2009. This in effect legalized Ethiopian support to the ASWJ, as now the Monitoring Group considered them to be a legitimate Somali security sector

---

<sup>209</sup> Dagne, *Somalia: Current Conditions and Prospects for a Lasting Peace*, 4.

<sup>210</sup> Only Burundi and Uganda had actually contributed troops

<sup>211</sup> "Ethiopia to train forces allied to Somali Government."

institution, and therefore eligible for exceptions under the arms embargo.<sup>212</sup> In essence, many of the groups Ethiopia supported were now completely legal, while those receiving assistance from Eritrea continued to be classified as illegal, drawing the ire of the world. In practice this meant that Ethiopia was found guilty of technical violations, rather than substantial violations. Technical violations denoted that support provided was to a legitimate security actor and would be approved under the exemption list, just that the nation in question had not notified and asked the Monitoring Group for permission in advance. Eritrea was guilty of substantial violations, meaning that its support violated the arms embargo in every way.<sup>213</sup> Consequently even though Ethiopia was still openly flaunting the Committee by routinely failing to keep it abreast of its actions, its violations were reduced to an insignificant level. It is notable that routine incursions by the Ethiopian National Defense Forces on Somali soil, such as those in July 2009 in the Hiraaan and Galguduud regions, continued to be regarded as blatant violations.<sup>214</sup> Ethiopian forces even engaged in joint ASWJ operations against Al-Shabaab.<sup>215</sup> However, when the time for sanctions came Ethiopia's substantial violations were not considered, and Eritrea was the sole target.

Following Aweys' marginalization Eritrea stepped in again to improve the situation of its beneficiary. In January 2009, Hizbul Islam emerged under the banner of Aweys as a new Islamist organization. Aweys had brought together four Islamist groups, the ARS-Asmara, Ras Kamboni brigades, Somali Islamic Front, and Anoole, in common cause against the TFG. Though collaboration and cooperation of all four groups was troubled from the start, and ebbed and flowed through the course of operations (in fact the Ras Kamboni brigades were left to fend for themselves in October 2009 when they unsuccessfully attempted to take on Al-Shabaab in Kismayo, only make a complete break from

---

<sup>212</sup> *Report of the Monitoring Group and the Panel of Experts on Somalia - 10 March 2010*, 55.

<sup>213</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.

<sup>214</sup> *Ibid.*, 52-53.

<sup>215</sup> *Ibid.*, 52.

Hizbul Islam four months later in order to join Al-Shabaab),<sup>216</sup> Eritrea proved to be an important political player once again in internal Somali politics. Asmara was instrumental in the April 2009 return of Aweys to Somalia to command Hizbul Islam on the ground, and within weeks Al-Shabaab and Hizbul Islam, representing all major Islamic fundamentalist groups in Somalia, teamed up for a joint offensive against the TFG forces in Mogadishu.<sup>217</sup> Despite the AMISOM induced survival of the TFG and the fallout between Hizbul Islam and Al-Shabaab in the wake of the operation's failure, without Eritrea's role in getting Aweys back to Somalia, it is unlikely that it would have occurred at all.

By the end of 2009 Eritrea's clandestine affairs were drawing large amounts of attention. IGAD, a regional grouping of Horn of African nations that Eritrea had formally suspended itself from in 2007, first called for sanctions in May 2009.<sup>218</sup> The issue was taken up by the African Union at its summit meeting later that month, calling on the United Nations Security Council to impose sanctions on Eritrea.<sup>219</sup> The call to sanction a fellow member was an unprecedented step for the body to take, and reflected the intensity of concern the rest of the continent felt over the issue. In response, Eritrea recalled its ambassador to the AU.<sup>220</sup> Yet the Security Council followed suit, using Eritrea's 2008 incursion into Djiboutian territory and the ensuing stand-off as a founding base to levy sanctions for its Somalia policy, as it constituted "a threat to international peace and security."<sup>221</sup> The sanctions included an arms embargo, travel restrictions, and asset freezes on Eritrean political and military leadership, while giving the Monitoring Group the power to investigate.<sup>222</sup>

---

<sup>216</sup> *Somalia's Divided Islamists*, 10,12.

<sup>217</sup> Eritrea provided Aweys, along with several other ARS leaders, with Eritrean passports, and arranged for a charter flight through a Kenyan airline company - *Report of the Monitoring Group and the Panel of Experts on Somalia - 10 March 2010*, 22-23.

<sup>218</sup> "Africa bloc urges Eritrea sanctions - Africa - Al Jazeera English."

<sup>219</sup> "AU calls for sanctions on Eritrea."

<sup>220</sup> "Eritrea breaks with African Union."

<sup>221</sup> United Nations Security Council, "Resolution 1907."

<sup>222</sup> *Ibid.*

Ethiopia benefited greatly with regards to its violations in Somalia in comparison to Eritrea, because it was backing the 'right' guys, established within the context of the Global War on Terror. The support of the United Nations Security Council, and the United States in particular, flowed to the TFG. Other countries in the region were also united around this stance. Thus Ethiopian violations were given a blind eye, and eventually even legitimized, while IGAD, the AU, and the U.N. all vigorously complained about Eritrea. The partial lifting of the Somali arms embargo in 2006 also served Ethiopia's benefit, as it allowed for weapons, military equipment, technical training, and assistance in support of a proposed IGAD mission.<sup>223</sup> That mission never got off the ground, but it paved the way for support to the TFG. Though the Monitoring Group still considered Ethiopian troops in Somalia to be illegal, there was little action behind its words. Ethiopia couched its invasion under the rubric of self-defense by claiming that because the ICU had declared jihad against the state, Ethiopia was acting under the legitimacy of self-defense allowed by the U.N. Charter,<sup>224</sup> and this argument was deemed persuasive enough by most major powers.

#### **Drawdown (Phase IV)**

---

The sanctions of December 2009 heralded a period of decreased involvement on both sides, leading to the fourth and current phase in the proxy battle. Given the increasingly clandestine nature of Eritrea's activities in Somalia it is difficult to know just exactly how much matters have been reduced. The U.N. Monitoring Group says by the end of 2009 "the scale and nature of Eritrean support had either diminished or become less visible, but had not altogether ceased."<sup>225</sup> Either Eritrea was getting better at hiding what it was doing, or was in fact scaling back. In reality it is probably a bit of both. Taking into account the strength of official outcry by the regime in Asmara over the imposition of sanctions, it is

---

<sup>223</sup> *Resolution 1725.*

<sup>224</sup> *Report of the Monitoring Group and the Panel of Experts on Somalia - 18 July 2007, 12.*

<sup>225</sup> *Report of the Monitoring Group and the Panel of Experts on Somalia - 10 March 2010, 21.*

clear it is not an issue taken lightly, and one that is affecting regional calculations.<sup>226</sup> The historic distrust of the international community and focus on self-reliance may lessen the impact of such an approach towards a nation like Eritrea, but Eritrea sees itself as a regional power, and sanctions, even if symbolic, affect such a status. An expert on Horn of Africa affairs put it this way, “how much the sanctions actually affect Eritrea is unknown, but Eritrea is trying to get out from under them.”<sup>227</sup> Regardless, this has meant that in Somalia the classic proxy war has significantly diminished but not completely extinguished. Yet sanctions only tell part of the story.

Another compounding factor leading to a reduction of Eritrean involvement is that their main recipient has become increasingly irrelevant. When Eritrea facilitated the return of Hassan Dahir Aweys to lead Hizbul Islam in a joint offensive with Al-Shabaab against the TFG, Aweys and Hizbul Islam were poised to be major players on the Somali scene. However, the failure of that operation hastened the downfall of Hizbul Islam as an effective fighting force. Its clumsy coalition was tested by the Ras Kamboni-Al Shabaab clash, and eventually fell apart upon their defection. The other three factions held together, but their battlefield realities did not translate into the promise Eritrea had hoped for. The most telling evidence of this was the December 2010 merger between Hizbul Islam and Al-Shabaab. Many within Hizbul Islam had previously resisted such cooperation beyond limited offensives due to Al-Shabaab’s wider focus of the struggle beyond the borders of Somalia and their ties to Al-Qaeda, but were now overruled.<sup>228</sup>

The merger demonstrates the weakness of Hizbul Islam more than anything else, and also signals a decreased ability of Eritrea to influence the anti-TFG Islamist movement. While Eritrea did support both Hizbul Islam and Al-Shabaab, it always favored the former. With Aweys in decline, the

---

<sup>226</sup> “Eritrea: Ministry of Foreign Affairs Press Release.”

<sup>227</sup> “Author interview with a regional expert.”

<sup>228</sup> *Somalia’s Divided Islamists*, 5.



horse they backed did not prove worthy. His group has been in regression since the failure of the joint May 2009 offensive, and was left with little choice as a fighting force (either join or be destroyed). As a result it is less an alliance between equal factions, but more an absorption of Hizbul Islam by Al-Shabaab.<sup>229</sup> Hassan Dahir Aweys essentially capitulated, and is not expected to play a major role in a movement dominated by a younger guard of Islamists. The decline of Aweys is intricately linked to the decline of Eritrean influence. The leadership of Al-Shabaab is less prone to listen to dictates from Asmara, as they enjoy strength outside of its patronage, something Hizbul Islam failed to achieve. For example, it is unlikely for Eritrea to be able to select key leadership posts in the movement, something they were able to do with Aweys' prior groups. The very fact that Hizbul Islam would not exist without Eritrea compared to Al-Shabaab's somewhat indigenous roots explains the lessening nature of Eritrean influence in this new dynamic. Non-state groups that are dependent on external aid tend to be weaker than those that are not, and this aspect of insurgent support played itself out between Hizbul Islam and Al-Shabaab.

Eritrea is also wary of Islamic extremism to a degree, having struggled with religious terrorism in the form of the Eritrean Islamic Jihad (EIJ), a movement linked to bin Laden during his stay in Sudan.<sup>230</sup> That movement, though largely defeated in the 1990's, still operates in Western Eritrea and remains a source of internal insecurity. With its purported links to Al-Qaeda, there is a limit to how much Eritrea can truly back Al-Shabaab if the EIJ is a natural ally and both are part of a larger movement antithetical to Isaias's domestic interests.<sup>231</sup> While Eritrea and Al-Shabaab enjoy a common enemy, Al-Shabaab is also part of a fundamentalist network that views itself as a vanguard of the movement's extension throughout the Horn of Africa. Somalia is the current target, but ambitions include spreading Islamist

---

<sup>229</sup> "Author interview with a regional expert."

<sup>230</sup> Filiu, *Could Al-Qaeda Turn African in the Sahel?*, 3.

<sup>231</sup> "Author interview with a regional expert."

governance,<sup>232</sup> something that ostensibly would bring them into confrontation with the secularist regime in Asmara.

During Ethiopia's occupation, Eritrea and Al-Shabaab provided for a marriage of convenience, as their larger interests coincided with the desire to inflict pain upon Ethiopia. With the pullout of troops, a common enemy still exists in the TFG, but much less so. For Eritrea, the TFG is supported by Ethiopia so there is some motivation for combating it, but in reality the necessity to provide assistance to a hardline Islamist group that already dominates an ineffectual organization is much less than the need to hit Ethiopia itself. The overall regional dynamics have changed, and with the imposition of sanctions and Ethiopia's withdrawal, the impetus for Eritrea to be involved in Somalia has diminished. As mentioned above, Byman notes that states are always motivated by geopolitical interests first and foremost, and now Eritrea's interests are inhibiting a deeper alliance with Al-Shabaab.

Regardless of the degree of motivation, Eritrea has threaded a thin line with Al-Shabaab in the past. Support flowing from Asmara to Al-Shabaab was always more pragmatic than anything else, and contrary to popular belief less strong than many assume.<sup>233</sup> Supplies from Eritrea may be welcome, but are not necessary. Al-Shabaab has a strong ideological vision steeped in Wahhabist ideology, something hardline leaders will not compromise on, nor be subject to Eritrean influence. Whatever the reality of true local backing for such an extremist view of Islam is on the ground in Somalia, Al-Shabaab is tied to a larger global struggle, and is not an organization that Eritrea can readily control. There may be some evidence that Eritrea has already discovered this and has been distancing itself from the more transnational goals of Al-Shabaab. When Al-Shabaab publically acknowledged that it was prepared to send fighters across the water to Yemen in early 2010, Afewerki was caught between the movement and a neighbor that Eritrea enjoyed intermittent periods of good relations with, but currently had no reason

---

<sup>232</sup> *Somalia's Divided Islamists*, 5.

<sup>233</sup> "Author interview with a regional expert."

to ostracize. Asmara made it clear that it disapproved of the Al-Shabaab statement, in order to assuage an incensed Yemeni president.<sup>234</sup> Eritrea sees Al-Shabaab as a useful means of challenging Ethiopia, but the movement has larger goals to which Eritrea cannot ascribe to, explaining why cooperation between them was never as deep as with Hizbul Islam, and why Eritrea may be distancing itself now.

Furthermore while the sanctions have affected Eritrea, so too has the perception of its support for terrorism. The United States threatened to add Eritrea to its list of state sponsors of terrorism in 2008, a move that was largely a symbolic act of shaming as aid between the countries was practical non-existent.<sup>235</sup> Ultimately Eritrea was not put on the list, as the argument for engagement was considered to be more productive than shunning and isolation, but it was given the notorious distinction of “not cooperating fully with U.S. counterterrorism efforts.”<sup>236 237</sup> Yet many still wish to revisit the situation. U.S. Representative Ed Royce wrote an open letter to Secretary of State Hilary Clinton after the July 2010 Kampala bombings imploring her to consider adding Eritrea, as engagement was reaping little benefit.<sup>238</sup> Eritrea is notoriously inept at diplomacy, but it understands the significance of a move that would link the state with nations such as North Korea, Cuba, and Iran.

To this effect the Kampala bombings, perpetrated by Al-Shabaab, solidified Eritrea’s position towards the group. Already on shaky ground internationally and under sanctions, the regional pariah did not also want to be associated with the international Islamic terrorist movement, and Asmara has made a practical decision to shelve deep ties with Al-Shabaab. The International Crisis Group declared shortly after the bombings that “there is very little evidence to suggest that Eritrea has, or is currently,

---

<sup>234</sup> Holzer, “International Relations and Security Network.”

<sup>235</sup> Lyons, “Ethiopia’s Convergence of Crises,” 160.

<sup>236</sup> *Beyond the Fragile Peace Between Ethiopia and Eritrea: Averting New War*, 7-8.

<sup>237</sup> *Somalia: To Move Beyond the Failed State*, n25-6.

<sup>238</sup> Onyiego, “Analysts say Eritrea is Not Supporting al-Shabaab | News | English.”

supporting Al-Shabaab,” and that Asmara’s previous “support was not aimed at terrorism.”<sup>239</sup> Evidently Eritrea does not view participation in Islamic inspired terrorism as beneficial to its interests. Events in Somalia have taken a on a life of their own, outside the realm of simple Ethiopian-Eritrean attempts to weaken each other, and that has allowed for the exit of both nations as main players in the arena. Ethiopia still harbors significant security interests that require its participation, even directly from time to time, but Eritrean involvement has declined as it was based on reasons of its own gain, and many of those reasons have since ceased.

With Eritrea’s declining activity, the intensity of the proxy war between in Somalia has been significantly reduced. This does not imply that relations between with Ethiopia are primed for an upswing in the near future. The situation remains one of protracted stalemate, and Eritrea’s decision to make itself less involved in Somalia stems from calculations other than Badme in particular. Eritrea’s support was always strongest when Ethiopia was either physically occupying Somali territory or trying to goad an Ethiopian invasion. In the run up to December 2006 until January 2009 Eritrea found itself in a favorable situation, with troops and significant resources diverted from their border and tied down in Somalia.<sup>240 241</sup> Eritrea’s hope was to bleed Ethiopia, and to that effect Asmara heavily supported anti-Ethiopian elements by the measures listed above. This was an indirect means of confronting a larger adversary, and one Eritrea took full advantage of. With Ethiopia’s pullout and the transition of internal Somali security to the AMISOM force, the ability to pursue direct attacks on Ethiopian troops has disappeared, thereby creating the conditions for a lessening of Eritrean involvement in Somali affairs.

---

<sup>239</sup> Ibid.

<sup>240</sup> 14,000 Ethiopian troops were used in the initial invasion of Mogadishu - Hoehne, *Counter-terrorism in Somalia: How external interference helped to produce militant Islamism*, 20.

<sup>241</sup> Reports cite the number of Ethiopian troops occupying Somalia to be only around 3,000, but the resources needed to maintain them were a drain on an army also concerned about its Northern border - “Ethiopia's Somalia dilemma.”

Yet as Asmara is drawing down from Somalia, its foreign policy remains Ethiopia-centric, and is looking for other ways to increase its stature vis-à-vis that eternal competition.

## SECTION VI - CONTEMPORARY RELATIONS

### Ethiopian Policy

---

Ethiopia's current policy towards the region involves a combination of public support for the TFG, along with the private arming of Somali border clans and the ASWJ, and an intensive counter-insurgency campaign in Ogaden. These programs are ultimately designed to ensure stability within Ethiopia, the core interest driving foreign policy. Ethiopia is still propping up certain entities within Somalia, marking its continued participation. Ethiopia's activities have always revolved around core strategic interests, while Eritrea's was more about striking at Ethiopia. Accordingly, Ethiopia's sustained involvement is to be expected, but given the diminished standing of Eritrea, the status of the conflict as a classic proxy war has officially ended. At best one could say Ethiopia is pursuing regional objectives via proxy, but in reality given its strong and often direct involvement coupled with the TFG's general weakness, Ethiopia is really doing this in spite of, instead of via, its proxies. Thus the classic proxy war is over, though Ethiopia maintains its previous relationships.

Ethiopian troops continue to cross into Somalia when it deems necessary. There have been recent cooperative operations with the TFG and AMISOM on Al-Shabaab positions along the border. In an early 2011 offensive, residents of Belet Weyne claimed Ethiopian tanks were involved in joint efforts to push Al-Shabaab from the area.<sup>242</sup> Similar statements concerning Ethiopian troops were recorded from witnesses in Bulo Hawo, a town near the Kenya-Ethiopia-Somalia nexus.<sup>243</sup> Accurate information is

---

<sup>242</sup> Gettleman and Ibrahim, "Shifting Battlefronts Cut a Long Gash Across Somalia."

<sup>243</sup> "Somali forces push back militants."

difficult to come by given the security situation and lack of foreign reporting presence on the ground, but such evidence points towards the commonly held assumption that Ethiopian forces routinely cross the Somali border to pursue militants. Ethiopia has developed longstanding ties with certain border clans, and sees it necessary to augment such support with physical action from time to time. This has been Ethiopian policy throughout the past two decades, and there is little reason to suspect a break from tradition now.

The international community has seen the levels of Ethiopian determination to avoid fundamentalist Islamic rule in Somalia, and despite getting burned during its 2006 invasion and occupation many analysts predict Ethiopia will be ready to step in again, should the TFG fall.<sup>244</sup> The elimination of Al-Shabaab would pave the way for a pliant, dependent central government in Mogadishu. Such a government is in line with Ethiopian interests as its dependence would allow Addis Abba a large amount of influence, and favorable governments in Somalia will be loath to pursue aims of reuniting with Ogaden province or providing support to rebels with a similar aim. If this could be achieved in a manner stable enough for Ethiopia to feel secure on its eastern flank, an unlikely outcome in the near future, then Zenawi might be able to turn his attention back to his previous preoccupation, that of the northern border with Eritrea. All of this goes to show that the classic proxy war in Somalia is dead with Eritrea's removal from the situation, but that Ethiopia still takes turn between direct and indirect involvement in pursuit of national interests.

### **Continued Stalemate**

---

While involvement in Somalia has decreased, it would be a mistake to assume this signifies an upturn in relations between the neighbors. The closure of Eritrean activity in Somalia stems from a number of reasons, none of which have to do with an improvement of ties with Ethiopia. The border is

---

<sup>244</sup> Abbink, "E-mail interview."

still unsettled, and until that occurs friendly relations will be impossible to achieve. Eritrean foreign policy is still based on competition with Addis Abba, and Zenawi continues to suffer from domestic reasons to avoid giving up any territorial gains. Simply one arena of competition has come to a close. Other means may present themselves, and the distancing from Somalia may not be permanent, as any stable and peaceful end-state solution there seems far off. The main lesson Eritrea has learned over its border dispute is that power speaks more than diplomacy, and the use of power first followed by some diplomacy is a viable means of achieving goals. Eritrea submitted territorial disputes with three different neighbors to international arbitration in 1996, 2000, and 2008, underscoring a key point that the Isaias regime still believes the international community is capable at some level of being a fair judge and positive guarantor of sovereignty to small nations. However, in all three of those instances arbitration was preceded by the application of direct force, in an attempt to acquire better positioning at the bargaining table. The Eritrean regime is not hesitant to make limited use of its large army for the purposes of defending national borders, and the unsettled status of Badme gives rise to concerns of a violent future.

Similar sentiments apply to the use of proxies. Favored patrons in Somalia have disappeared, but the ONLF remains a source of support in an attempt to undermine Ethiopia, though some argue true levels of assistance cannot be all that significant considering the state of the movement.<sup>245</sup> The ONLF is under intense pressure by the Ethiopian military, and its survival is in question. The lack of viable partners for a pragmatic relationship though does not signify that the Eritrean state is any less willing to resort to such measures, but simply that partnerships which enhance Eritrea's regional stature do not currently exist. Eritrean support to the ONLF will be a key measure to watch in this regard. In late 2010 the Ethiopian government surrounded about 250-300 ONLF fighters in the Maar-Maar mountains as they tried to enter Ethiopia via Abdoulqadir, a town on the border of Ethiopia and Somaliland. These

---

<sup>245</sup> "Author interview with a regional expert."

fighters had been training in Eritrea, who facilitated their infiltration into Ethiopian territory.<sup>246</sup>

However, similar to the Hizbul Islam operation after the return of Aweys to Somalia, this event was a catastrophic failure and could signal the decline of Eritrean assistance due to overall ineffectiveness.

This incident demonstrates that the effect of sanctions on Eritrea has meant simply that the use of proxies in one specific setting is declining because of diminished gains and increased costs, rather than an overall switch in policy. The use of proxies in another area which does not have an arms embargo or the world's attention is not excluded by such developments. This demonstrates that despite the decrease of activity in Somalia, there has been no fundamental shift in Eritrean behavior. Its view of the world and its backyard remains more or less unchanged, and Ethiopia continues to dominate all aspects of foreign policy. The means of the next phase of this destructive rivalry have yet to become apparent, but while the proxy war has more or less ended, the cold war, nor the potential for a hot one, has not.

## SECTION VII - CONCLUSION

### Why Proxies?

---

The decade long proxy war in Somalia between Ethiopia and Eritrea has largely come to a close. That battle for a time conformed to a classic proxy war model, a rarity in the current security paradigm. While the use of proxies is increasing globally and looks set to continue as poorer nations see them as a useful low cost means of achieving objectives while avoiding the moral, diplomatic, and physical costs of war, the incorporation of neutral 3<sup>rd</sup> party territories in such battles is a dying phenomenon. Poorer states tend to fight locally, supporting insurgents in their neighbors and vice versa. The Ethiopian-Eritrean proxy war did not always conform to such Cold War classicism, especially when Ethiopia was goaded into invading and occupying for Somalia for over two years, but the basic dynamic harkened

---

<sup>246</sup> Davidson, "Ethiopia-Based Ogaden Rebel Group Denies Fighters Surrounded in Somalia."



back to the U.S.-USSR led battles of the Cold War. Two main differences from that model though were that Ethiopia had legitimate security interests in the supposedly neutral 3<sup>rd</sup> country, something the U.S. and USSR typically did not outside of a general desire to increase membership to the capitalist or communist blocs. Also, Eritrea was trying to directly hit Ethiopia through their proxies, rather than just being focused on destroying its opponent's proxy forces. Despite these variations, the two sided classic model held for the better part of the decade, and remains an outlier in the world today.

Given the use of proxies in this context, and its proliferation around the globe, one must wonder what lessons the Ethiopian-Eritrean example offers as to the effectiveness of such tactics. What is clear from the outset is that neither nation truly achieved their objectives in full. Ethiopia is still pursuing its interests in Somalia, while for Eritrea the core issue dated back to Badme, and it remains under Ethiopian protection. For a time Eritrea was in an advantageous position as Ethiopian forces were tied down in Mogadishu, but the lack of movement on Eritrea's part revealed that it was not enough to open up a second front for whatever reasoning. Ethiopia has also benefited in that Eritrea has become the subject of sanctions and is now watching its movements more carefully. Yet that appears to have just limited actions within Somalia itself and not forced the nation to give up on collusion with anti-Ethiopian groups all together.

This crisis of expectations may have to do with anticipating too much from proxies. As Loveman pointed out, proxy forces by nature are unreliable, and those that require the most support are typically the most ineffective, due to their inability to build a strong domestic base.<sup>247</sup> It may have been necessary for each nation to reduce expected gains sought from their beneficiaries, or to seek additional measures in tandem. The key lesson here is that proxy forces are more suited to accomplish short-term gains, and that long-term strategic objectives are less apt to meet success through such an approach. In

---

<sup>247</sup> Loveman, "Assessing the phenomenon of proxy intervention," 46.

the short-term, Eritrea did get Ethiopian troops tied down and forced Addis Abba to concentrate resources on its eastern flank. That might have occurred without Eritrean involvement in Somalia, with Islamist groups threatening pursuit of Ogaden. Ethiopia also achieved success in that the main Eritrean proxy, Hizbul Islam, was rendered useless, and international opprobrium forced Eritrea from the conflict, discrediting it amongst the diplomatic community and making Ethiopia's position over Badme seem more tenable in comparison. However again, the demise of Hizbul Islam likely would have occurred in any case, since it enjoyed little internal support and was completely dependent on Eritrea. Thus while each nation achieved short-term gains, it cannot be said with confidence that this was a direct result of their participation. Certainly it hastened events and increased the violence of the situation, but it is troublesome to assign it as the decisive factor.

What exactly then was the outcome of Ethiopian-Eritrean efforts in Somalia? For one it kept the nation destabilized for another decade. Ethiopian endeavors in particular have proved disastrous as Al-Shabaab can trace its roots directly from Ethiopia's invasion. There have been benefits vis-à-vis each other with regards to their competition, but both nations have been burned in Somalia, Ethiopia through its occupation and Eritrea through international sanctioning. Again it is difficult to say Somalia would have come to a peaceful end state, especially as one had not emerged in the decade prior, but the escalation of tensions between Addis Abba and Asmara unmistakably worsened the situation and destabilized the entire region. Both nations also wasted millions of dollars, lost lives, and missed a chance for possible reconciliation efforts over their border situation. Therefore it seems for Ethiopia, Eritrea, and definitely Somalia, the costs ultimately outweighed the benefits in the long run.

Why then would such a strategy be pursued? The prioritization of the short-term over long-term is one answer. While proxies are unlikely to bring about true change, they do affect the situation and give the country supporting them a degree of influence they otherwise would not have. They are

also a halfway measure to getting involved physically, though as seen in Ethiopia's case sometimes nations get provoked into direct engagement in order to uphold their proxies. The other major benefit is the ease to which they can be readily used or discarded. Ethiopia's situation is looked at through a different lens as the nation has certain legitimate security interests it needs to see to fruition in Somalia, but for Eritrea the prime motivation was to make Ethiopia feel insecure. Hence Eritrea had the ability to work with or turn off support to their proxies at their leisure, since their core interests were not threatened either way.

The ease to which a nation can support a proxy and reverse positions when it becomes too costly, as happened with Eritrea after the sanctions regime came in place, is a major attractive quality to this sort of warfare. Hizbul Islam, and to a lesser degree Al-Shabaab, provided Eritrea with a low cost means of disrupting Ethiopia's eastern flank. It helped that the movements already had some local grounding and animosity towards Addis Abba, and this did not need to be fabricated. The convergence of interests was a fortunate circumstance for Eritrea, and the short-term gains they received were well worth their investment. It could be argued that they went too far, and held onto Hizbul Islam even once it became clear the movement would not transform into an effective fighting force. Two other key lessons emerge here. First, in pursuit of limited, short-term gains proxies can be a very cost-effective and relatively simple tool. That is what drives their continued use as a tactic of statecraft around the world. Second, patron nations need to realistically assess the value their proxies present and be ready to cut the cord when the situation dictates, rather than hanging on too long and awaiting potential disaster.

A related element is that clandestine proxy warfare is typically a more effective route, though the increase in monitoring and communications technology has made that a more difficult approach in the modern world. If state support remains secret, that gives added benefits since the costs in terms of

regional standing and diplomatic relations is reduced, allowing for a continuation of policy. Eritrea's involvement became public knowledge, with nearly all other African nations united in their opposition and commitment to getting Asmara to change track. This raised costs dramatically; a more clandestine program might have been able to continue.

### **Back to the border**

---

Eritrea resorted to proxy warfare because of the frustration to achieve what it wanted in the course of the border war. In this vein, proxy warfare was a substitute for regular warfare. Neither nation was prepared to return to war for the reasons cited in the beginning of this paper, and the enfeebled UNMEE mission separating the armies was designed to ensure an unsteady peace remained in place. With that avenue of competition closed, Eritrea sought to drag Ethiopia into a new one elsewhere. Herein lies the danger of ignoring the status of Badme. Both nations have made it an integral part of their security, and without a resolution, the resumption of normal relations is impossible. Both nations have also shown their ability to destabilize others in pursuit of besting each other, in addition to the power to inflict heavy losses. Despite that the fighting in Somalia has died down for the time being, neither relations nor policies have improved. Ethiopia and Eritrea will continue to destabilize the Horn of Africa in whatever ways they see fit, causing peace in the region to remain elusive as long as they persist as embittered enemies. Somalia was chaotic before and after the entrance of these parties, and remains so to this day. However, some of the worst fighting in its entire anarchic twenty year history took place under the guise of this competition. Such rivalry is incongruent to the implementation of sustained peace in the Horn of Africa, a region that has rarely enjoyed calm since the end of colonization. Somalia grabs all the headline attention, and deservedly so. Yet no one in the Horn of Africa will enjoy peace until Ethiopia and Eritrea do. A *détente* between the nations will not result in a peaceful Somalia, there are many other factors involved contributing to its chaos. However, it

would be a starting point, and prove beneficial to attaining peaceful relations within the Horn of Africa at large, which will not occur otherwise.

Djibouti in particular is a nation to watch, as it is suffering from internal discontent between its two major ethnic groups, Eritrea has recently engaged it in skirmishes over a disputed island, and Ethiopia is determined to protect the nation as its only major, stable access to the sea. In fact the skirmish between Djibouti and Eritrea in 2008 over Ras Doumeira can be directly traced to this dynamic, as it occurred in the wake of Djibouti's concessions under Ethiopian pressure to drop a proposed price increase on the use of its port, much to the chagrin of Eritrea.<sup>248</sup> At the time Prime Minister Zenawi made obvious what he was prepared to do if clashes continued, when he pronounced that "in the face of the unpredictable nature of the Eritrean regime . . . Ethiopia will make sure the corridor [Djibouti] is safe and sound."<sup>249</sup> Djibouti became Ethiopia's main port since it could no longer use Assab after the Eritrean war, and Addis Abba does not take lightly to having its core interests around the region threatened. Eritrea may yet seek to involve Djibouti in the future of its rotating obsession to stifle Ethiopia at every turn.

The situation in the Horn of Africa is similar to how many third world nations were caught up in serious conflagrations during the Cold War. They were not able to enjoy peace as long as the two superpowers used their territories and local struggles to jockey each other for positional advances; the same is now occurring on a smaller scale in the Horn of Africa. The belligerent parties may have left Somalia currently, but there is no guarantee this will last, nor another means of indirect conflict will make itself available. The international community has been frustrated since 2008 and has ignored the issue, but if it is serious about reducing conflict in such a troubled area of the world at high risk to failed states, perpetual instability, and international terrorism, it owes itself to revisit Badme anew and try to

---

<sup>248</sup> Ewing, *Ethiopia and Eritrea in Turmoil*, 6.

<sup>249</sup> *Ibid.*

come up with a resolution over the small, dusty town of 5,000 that is destabilizing an entire vulnerable region. While neither nation is prepared to make unilateral overtures, equally applied pressure from the international community can bring both parties back to the table.

### **Ways Forward**

---

To that effect this paper would be remiss without providing a few suggestions for a way forward. To begin, increased attention, or any attention at all, must be given to the border issue. This is best placed to come from major powers, such as the United States. The United Nations is still tainted through previous association with the failed EEBC process, and Eritrea might not be ready to trust the organization again. However the United States, with a relatively new administration that Eritrea previously reached out to, might be able to make some headway.<sup>250</sup> Secretary Clinton did the right thing by avoiding Eritrea's placement on the State Department's sponsors of international terrorism list in favor of engagement, but that engagement has not been forthcoming since. For all its bizarreness and diplomatic failings Eritrea has shown itself to be pragmatic at times. It has submitted three different border disputes to arbitration, and abided by a losing decision to Yemen. The nation still prefers to utilize force over diplomacy, but it can be dealt with. In this manner the international community has a major tool with which to bargain, the U.N. imposed international sanctions. Eritrea evidently wants out from under them, and perhaps extractions can be made in return.

To be a little more specific, some sort of dialogue must begin over the border process. Prerequisite for any such maneuver would be to convince Ethiopia that they lost the EEBC ruling and cannot revisit it. The means of applying any, or increased, pressure on Ethiopia must be viably

---

<sup>250</sup> Eritrea in early 2009 demonstrated a willingness to engage with the incoming Obama administration, evident by sending congratulatory letters to President Obama and Secretary Clinton, increasing contacts with the U.S. ambassador, and reducing anti-American media coverage, among other signs - U.S. State Department, "09ASMARA47."

demonstrated to Eritrea, to show that the world is not biased against it. Short-term cooperation in Ethiopia may be affected, but with significant, sustained pressure Zenawi will realize he truly has no other favorable options. One means of incentivizing Ethiopian acceptance is putting the issue of access to Assab on the table. It is highly unlikely that the majority of Ethiopians are willing to risk another war for a nondescript town only hardline Tigrayans view as integral, the inclusion of preferential port access might be enough for a landlocked Ethiopian population. In a somewhat democratic system Zenawi potentially has the means for neutralizing hardliners within his party, should he choose to break with them over this issue. A very visible manifestation of such a move would be a high level official statement from the Government of Ethiopia reaffirming its preference for Eritrean sovereignty, non-interference, and the EEBC process. Such a statement would go a long way to assuaging Eritrean insecurities, if done in a genuine manner.

Simultaneously, it must be demonstrated to Eritrea that Ethiopia has legitimate concerns over the execution of the border decision, which cannot go ahead without its approval. The situation has gone on long enough for Eritrea to realize it cannot gain control of Badme without international and Ethiopian support. That support will not be forthcoming without the instigation of a dialogue over implementation, not over the decision itself. With Ethiopia forced to accept the basic agreement and the possibility of regaining access to Assab, and Eritrea given the possibility of release from sanctions upon entering into dialogue (in addition to certifying the termination of support to various insurgent groups), negotiations could begin. With neither side talking now and only pursuing their differences through non-peaceful means, just the beginnings of any such dialogue would represent a major breakthrough.

Over the longer run institutions need to be developed throughout the region that allow for peaceful conflict resolution. Ethiopian-Eritrean relations were so heavily dependent on the personal

relationship of their leaders, that once bitter animosity developed between them there was little other recourse to resolve national disputes. Beholding two nations, and indirectly the entire region, to the relations between two men is an entirely unacceptable situation. After the border crisis broke out, there was a lack of regional mechanisms to prevent escalation. Outside interventions failed, and a skirmish broadened into full scale warfare, of which the effects are still being felt today. IGAD was supposed to be a regional organization to provide such means, but it proved ineffectual, and Eritrea has excused itself from the organization. There is room for the return of IGAD's regional presence, but Eritrea must be convinced it is impartial and able to address regional issues effectively. Calling for the conditional lifting of the very sanctions it asked for two years ago would be a big step in this direction. Skirmishes routinely occur throughout the region, and until institutional mechanisms are developed that can address outstanding issues before the eruption of war, the constant fear of extreme violence will persist.

A new security regime must be set up in the Horn of Africa. This is difficult considering the situation in Somalia, but the Ethiopian-Eritrean dynamic is a good place to start. Cliffe notes how from 1991 until 1994 the nations of Sudan, Ethiopia, and Eritrea engaged in a regional security pact to stop supporting their neighbors' insurgents, causing one observer to remark that "for the first time in decades – maybe in history – all of the countries of the Horn of Africa actually do live in peace with each other."<sup>251</sup> This lasted until Eritrea and Sudan became disenchanted with each other for reasons not to be delved into here. Yet the basic premise is that an initiative to end support for non-state armed groups, and the constant cycle of revenge that propagates, exists in history. The principle of non-interference in each other's internal affairs needs to be brought back to the Horn of Africa. Ostensibly for a region whose default is to support non-state armed groups, this will be a difficult sell. Yet, the historical precedent is there, and for nations grown weary by constant war this can prove an attractive

---

<sup>251</sup> Cliffe, "Regional dimensions of conflict in the Horn of Africa," 92.



option. A non-aggression pact between Ethiopia and Eritrea, including external territories, needs to be a part of any eventual border agreement down the line, for gains to become institutionalized and peace to become the new default in the region.

The objectives listed above are long-term in nature. They will take time to implement and are not necessarily matters that will meet sudden success; even opening up a process of dialogue could take considerable time. Additionally, any immediate breakthrough over Badme without addressing other long standing, underlying issues is unlikely to result in lasting peace. Yet these measures have a chance to flourish given hard work, dedication, and the right circumstances. Those 'right circumstances' revolve around trust and a convivial climate of relations. Building trust in region full of the opposite is difficult. While the border issue ultimately needs to be resolved, any final agreement might be significantly off in the future. In this case, there are some indirect confidence-building measures the international community should start pressing now, that can help reduce tensions and engender a more trusting, open relationship. The enhancement of democracy is one, as next time the two countries comes close to war footing open debate would take place over possible moves, providing avenues of de-escalation.

However, democracy promotion is either country has proven problematic. Ethiopia openly flaunts Western criticism during elections, biding its time until the uproar dies down and foreign funding resumes. This behavior must be reversed, and Addis Abba should not receive any more funding until it shows genuine democratic processes. Ethiopia is an important country given its recent success in combating extreme poverty and its status as a crucial ally in the U.S. led Global War on Terror. Nonetheless, these issues cannot take precedent over the goal of democracy promotion. Given the current path, Ethiopia will continue its repression until a time when Zenawi is replaced by force, either by his own hardliners who have not been marginalized, or by other rebel groups gaining traction. The history of political change in Ethiopia is one done by the spear and gun, not the ballot. The current

prioritization of poverty reduction and anti-terrorism over democracy pursues short-term objectives while bidding time until aggressive regime change occurs, rather than initiating a process of non-violent politics. In Eritrea, democracy promotion is a fallacy. There is no legitimate opposition, as Afewerki has worked hard to ensure such circumstances. The lifting of sanctions can also be tied to the beginnings of some sort of process; the enactment of the long delayed constitution would be a good starting point. The people of both nations have suffered under the current set of frictions played upon by either regime. If given a chance to voice their concerns, overall tensions can be reduced.

While building democracy is difficult since it presupposes a challenge to those very people who are tasked with overseeing its introduction, trust can also be built through economics. Prior to their fallout, Ethiopia and Eritrea enjoyed mutually beneficial economic relations. Ethiopia had access to Eritrea's ports (specifically Assab) and Eritrea received dues and a market for most of its exports. In fact, most analyses of the root causes leading up to the war dwell on economic factors. While previously preferential agreements in favor of Eritrea will not be revived, trust can be developed through economic cooperation. Ethiopia desperately wants access to Assab and it is in Eritrea's interests to grant that, lest they further develop links with Djibouti as to make Eritrea's ports irrelevant in the future. Eritrea's economy is also in extremely dire straits, despite the boom in gold production currently on going.<sup>252</sup> The economy is heavily dependent on remittances, but the more repressive the regime becomes the less the diaspora is willing to contribute.<sup>253</sup> The regime needs to search for other avenues of hard currency, and collecting dues over something it already possesses is a simple first step. In this light, such collaboration seems easy since each nation has something the other wants. Yet nothing in this region comes easy. The incentives are there, and starting a dialogue that initially ignores the border issue but focuses on economic agreements can serve as a confidence building measure. Thus

---

<sup>252</sup> *Eritrea: The Siege State*, 26.

<sup>253</sup> Ewing, *Ethiopia and Eritrea in Turmoil*, 4.

coming to some sort of accord over Assab is a starting point to developing interdependent economic relations that can spread and deepen trust, leading to discussions about other more pertinent, but less immediately resolvable, security issues in a responsible manner.

While all of this would be wonderful news for the Horn of Africa and the world, the fact that it has not yet occurred signifies something. First, it demonstrates that the international community has not recovered from its exhaustion over Badme since it pulled out in 2008, nor is ready to return with the vigor and attention required. However, with renewed consideration, given the weariness of the past decade in terms of military losses and economics, a small breakthrough in one of the areas mentioned above might be possible, paving the way for a path forward. The international community must refocus, and be prepared to pressure and incentivize both nations fairly this time around. The key to any rejuvenated process will be getting Ethiopia and Eritrea to feel they are being treated as equals in a just process. The lack of pressure on Ethiopia vis-à-vis Eritrea doomed efforts during the UNMEE mission; a repeated failure stemming from a similar cause cannot be tolerated.

The other reason none of this has occurred has to do with the nature of the regimes themselves. Afewerki in Eritrea is particularly intransigent and has almost singlehandedly led his country into ruin from a decent starting point. Zenawi has revealed his true colors to be just as dictatorial as his northern neighbor at times. Zenawi though works well with the international community, and is consequently seen in a different light. The international community must try again for the sake of the region, and with the right combination of enticements and penalties, revolving around economics, sanctions, and international pressure, progress might be possible. It will be a delicate, complex, and trying process. However, a distinct possibility is that efforts will fail, both regimes will remain despicable, and will carry their enmities to the grave. In that case there would be little possibility of true improvement in the region without regime change.

Eritrea in particular is subject to such concerns. It is not genuine for the international community to pursue a path of working with Eritrea while at the same time undermining it. Thus Afewerki must be given a chance, and he must be made to know what failure of this last chance would mean. He must be persuaded to try to work diplomatically, not specifically on the border issue, but starting on a smaller, lesser threatening matter. However, if he continues his stubbornness, continues supporting insurgents in neighboring nations, continues the closure of the Eritrean political system and systematic repression of his people, continues to drive the economy into the ground, the international community will have no choice but to pursue a path of regime change. This most likely will not be forceful, but more along the means of providing increased support to the exiled democratic opposition in Addis Abba, supplying information to Eritrean citizens to incite increased discontent, and continuing international isolation and sanctions in the hopes of pressuring the Eritrean elite to take up the mantle of regime change. Afewerki needs to be given another chance, but given the history, he is presently the single most distressing factor in the Horn of Africa holding back the region. His removal is neither optimal nor likely nor immediately possible, but it may be necessary to move forward.

## Works Cited

- Abbink, Jon. "Briefing: The Eritrean-Ethiopian Border Dispute." *African Affairs* 97, no. 389 (October 1998): 551-565.
- . "E-mail interview." E-mail, January 6, 2011.
- "Africa bloc urges Eritrea sanctions - Africa - Al Jazeera English," May 21, 2009.  
<http://english.aljazeera.net/news/africa/2009/05/200952172646855653.html>.
- "Annan: U.S. wrong to support warlords in Somalia," n.d.  
[http://www.finalcall.com/artman/publish/World\\_News\\_3/article\\_2716.shtml](http://www.finalcall.com/artman/publish/World_News_3/article_2716.shtml).
- "AU calls for sanctions on Eritrea." *BBC*, May 23, 2009, sec. Africa.  
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/8064939.stm>.
- "Author interview with a regional expert," January 10, 2011.
- Barnes, Cedric, and Harun Hassan. *The Rise and Fall of Mogadishu's Islamic Courts*. Briefing Paper. Chatham House, April 2007.
- Beyond the Fragile Peace Between Ethiopia and Eritrea: Averting New War*. Africa Report. Nairobi/Brussels: International Crisis Group, June 17, 2008.
- Bhalla, Nita. "Badme: Village in no man's land." *BBC*, April 22, 2002, sec. Africa.  
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/1943527.stm>.
- Bruton, Bronwyn. *Somalia A New Approach*. Council Special Report. The Council on Foreign Relations, March 2010.
- Byman, Daniel, Peter Chalk, Bruce Hoffman, William Rosenau, and David Brannan. *Trends in Outside Support for Insurgent Movements*. MR-1405-OTI. Monograph Reports. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2001.  
[http://www.rand.org/pubs/monograph\\_reports/MR1405.html](http://www.rand.org/pubs/monograph_reports/MR1405.html).
- Cabdisalaam M. Ciisa-Salwe, and HAAN Associates. *Cold War Fallout: Boundary Politics and Conflict in the Horn of Africa*. London: HAAN, 2000.
- Can the Somali Crisis Be Contained?* Africa Report. Nairobi/Brussels: International Crisis Group, August 10, 2006.
- "CIA - The World Factbook," n.d. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/er.html>.
- Cliffe, Lionel. "Eritrea 2008: The Unfinished Business of Liberation." *Review of African*

- Political Economy* 35, no. 116 (2008): 323.
- . “Regional dimensions of conflict in the Horn of Africa.” *Third World Quarterly* 20, no. 1 (1999): 89.
- Dagne, Theodore S. *Somalia: Current Conditions and Prospects for a Lasting Peace*. Washington D.C.: Congressional Research Service, October 21, 2009.
- Davidson, William. “Ethiopia-Based Ogaden Rebel Group Denies Fighters Surrounded in Somalia.” 16 September 2010. *Bloomberg*, n.d. <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2010-09-16/ethiopia-based-ogaden-rebel-group-denies-fighters-surrounded-in-somalia.html>.
- Ennifar, Azouz. U.N. Memo. “Meeting with U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs.” U.N. Memo, June 26, 2006. <http://www.scribd.com/doc/45667310/Frazer-Somalia-Memo-2006>.
- “Eritrea breaks with African Union.” *afrol News*, November 20, 2009. <http://www.afrol.com/articles/10577>.
- “Eritrea 'may become failed state'.” *BBC*, September 22, 2010, sec. Africa. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-11389426>.
- “Eritrea: Ministry of Foreign Affairs Press Release.” *allAfrica.com*, December 23, 2009. <http://allafrica.com/stories/200912230803.html>.
- Eritrea: The Siege State*. Africa Report. Nairobi/Brussels: International Crisis Group, September 21, 2010.
- “Ethiopia and Eritrea -- An acrimonious divorce.” *Strategic Comments* 6, no. 2 (2000): 1.
- Ethiopia and Eritrea: Preventing War*. Africa Report. Nairobi/Brussels: International Crisis Group, December 22, 2005.
- Ethiopia and Eritrea: Stopping the Slide to War*. Africa Briefing. Nairobi/New York/Brussels: International Crisis Group, November 5, 2007.
- Ethiopia and Eritrea: War or Peace?* Africa Report. Nairobi/Brussels: International Crisis Group, September 24, 2003.
- “Ethiopia to train forces allied to Somali Government,” n.d. [http://igad.int/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=258:ethiopa-to-train-forces-allied-to-somali-government&catid=66:somalia&Itemid=179](http://igad.int/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=258:ethiopa-to-train-forces-allied-to-somali-government&catid=66:somalia&Itemid=179).
- “Ethiopia's Somalia dilemma.” *BBC*, December 2, 2008, sec. Africa. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/7760271.stm>.

- European Parliament. *Situation in the Horn of Africa*, 2009.
- Ewing, Jonathon. *Ethiopia and Eritrea in Turmoil*. ISS Situation Reports. Pretoria, South Africa: Institute for Security Studies, December 1, 2008.
- Filiu, Jean-Pierre. *Could Al-Qaeda Turn African in the Sahel?* Middle East Program - Carnegie Papers. Washington D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, June 2010.
- Gettleman, Jeffrey, and Mohammed Ibrahim. "Shifting Battlefronts Cut a Long Gash Across Somalia." *The New York Times*, February 24, 2011, sec. World / Africa.  
[http://www.nytimes.com/2011/02/25/world/africa/25somalia.html?\\_r=1&partner=rss&emc=rss](http://www.nytimes.com/2011/02/25/world/africa/25somalia.html?_r=1&partner=rss&emc=rss).
- Gilkes, Patrick. "National Identity and Historical Mythology in Eritrea and Somaliland." *Northeast African Studies* 10, no. 3 (2009): 163-187.
- Healy, Sally. *Eritrea's Regional Role and Foreign Policy: Past, Present and Future Perspectives*. Seminar Report. Chatham House, January 2008.
- . "Hard and Soft Power: Some Thoughts on the Practice of Eritrean Foreign Policy." In *Eritrea's External Relations*, 150-160. London, United Kingdom: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 2009.
- . *Lost Opportunities in the Horn of Africa: How Conflicts Connect and Peace Agreements Unravel*. Chatham House Report, June 2008.
- Healy, Sally, and Martin Plaut. *Ethiopia and Eritrea: Allergic to Persuasion*. Briefing Paper. Chatham House, January 2007.
- Henze, Paul B. *Eritrea's War: Confrontation, International Response, Outcome, Prospects*. 1st ed. Addis Ababa, Ethiopia: Shama Books, 2001.
- Hoehne, Markus Virgil. *Counter-terrorism in Somalia: How external interference helped to produce militant Islamism*. Halle/Saale, Germany: Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology, December 17, 2009.
- Holzer, Georg-Sebastian. "International Relations and Security Network." *Eritrea Recalibrates Somalia Policy*, March 17, 2010. <http://www.isn.ethz.ch/isn/Current-Affairs/Security-Watch/Detail/?ots591=4888CAA0-B3DB-1461-98B9-E20E7B9C13D4&lng=en&id=113820>.
- Holzer, Georg-Sebastian, and Ashley Eliot. "The 'Invention' of Terrorism in Somalia: paradigms and policy in U.S. foreign relations." *South African Journal of International Affairs* 16,

- no. 2 (August 2009): 215-244.
- Human Rights Watch. *Collective Punishment*. New York City, June 2008.  
<http://www.hrw.org/en/features/ogaden-war-crimes-ethiopia-0>.
- Iyob, Ruth. *The Eritrean Struggle for Independence: Domination, Resistance, Nationalism, 1941-1993*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.
- Jopson, Barney. "Inside the insular and secretive Eritrea." *Financial Time Magazine*, September 19, 2009. <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/2/8a70d442-a324-11de-ba74-00144feabdc0.html#axzz1A2d5Ueap>.
- Kagwanja, Peter. "Counter-terrorism in the Horn of Africa: New security frontiers, old Strategies." *African Security Review* 15, no. 3 (2006): 72.
- Kibreab, Gaim. *Eritrea: A Dream Deferred*. Woodbridge, Suffolk, UK: James Currey, 2009.
- Kidane Mengisteab. *Anatomy of the African Tragedy: Political, Economic, and Foreign Policy Crisis in Post-Independence Eritrea*. Trenton, NJ: Red Sea Press, 2005.
- Lata, Leenco. "The Ethiopian-Eritrea war." *Review of African Political Economy* 30, no. 97 (2003): 369.
- Loveman, Chris. "Assessing the phenomenon of proxy intervention." *Conflict, Security & Development* 2, no. 3 (2002): 29.
- Lyons, Terrence. *Avoiding Conflict in the Horn of Africa: Ethiopia and Eritrea*. Council on Foreign Relations, 2007.
- . "Ethiopia's Convergence of Crises." *Current History* 107, no. 708 (April 2008): 154-160.
- . "The Ethiopia-Eritrea Conflict and the Search for Peace in the Horn of Africa." *Review of African Political Economy* 36, no. 120 (2009): 167.
- Martell, Peter. "A View from Eritrea: Any Chance of Change Without War?." *Review of African Political Economy* 35, no. 116 (2008): 331.
- "Meles Predicts Ethiopia-Eritrea Boundary Deadline to Pass Without Incident." *VOANews.com*, November 30, 2007. <http://www.voanews.com/english/news/a-13-2007-11-30-voa6.html>.
- Menkhaus, Ken. "Governance without Government in Somalia: Spoilers, State Building, and the Politics of Coping." *International Security* 31, no. 3 (Winter 7, 2006): 74-106.
- . "Introduction." *The Adelphi Papers* 44, no. 364 (2004): 7.
- . *Somalia After the Ethiopian Occupation*. Washington D.C.: Enough!, February 9, 2009.



- . “Somalia: ‘They Created a Desert and Called it Peace(building)’.” *Review of African Political Economy* 36, no. 120 (2009): 223.
- Mills, Greg. “Africa's New Strategic Significance.” *The Washington Quarterly* 27, no. 4 (2004): 157-169.
- Morrison, J. Stephen. “Somalia's and Sudan's race to the fore in Africa.” *The Washington Quarterly* 25, no. 2 (2002): 191.
- Müller, Tanja R. “State making in the Horn of Africa: notes on Eritrea and prospects for the end of violent conflict in the Horn -- Analysis.” *Conflict, Security & Development* 6, no. 4 (2006): 503.
- Nega, Berhanu. “Ethiopia is Headed for Chaos.” *Current History* 109, no. 727 (May 2010): 186-192.
- Negash, Tekeste. *Brothers at War: Making Sense of the Eritrean-Ethiopian War*. Oxford: J. Currey, 2000.
- “No Illusions.” *The Economist*, March 17, 2011.
- Onyiego, Michael. “Analysts say Eritrea is Not Supporting al-Shabaab | News | English.” *VOANews.com*, July 21, 2010. <http://www.voanews.com/english/news/-Analysts-say-Eritrea-is-Not-Supporting-al-Shabab--98924444.html>.
- Pham, J. Peter. “Eritrea: Spoiler Exacerbates Crisis in the Horn of Africa and Beyond.” *World Defense Review*, n.d. <http://worlddefensereview.com/pham101509.shtml>.
- Plaut, Martin, and Patrick Gilkes. *Conflict In The Horn: Why Eritrea And Ethiopia Are At War*. Policy Brief. Chatham house, March 1999.
- Ploch, Lauren. *Africa Command: U.S. Strategic Interests and the Role of the U.S. Military in Africa*. Congressional Research Service, November 16, 2010.
- “Political History and Governance.” Institute for Security Studies, [http://www.issafrica.org/index.php?link\\_id=&slink\\_id=&link\\_type=12&slink\\_type=12&tmpl\\_id=3](http://www.issafrica.org/index.php?link_id=&slink_id=&link_type=12&slink_type=12&tmpl_id=3) 14, 5188.
- “Q&A: Horn's bitter border war.” *BBC*, December 7, 2005, sec. Africa. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/4041073.stm>.
- Record, Jeffrey. “External Assistance: Enabler of Insurgent Success.” *Parameters* 36, no. 3 (Autumn 2006): 36-49.
- Report of the Monitoring Group and the Panel of Experts on Somalia - 10 December 2008.*

- United Nations Security Council, December 10, 2008.
- Report of the Monitoring Group and the Panel of Experts on Somalia - 10 March 2010.* United Nations Security Council, March 10, 2010.
- Report of the Monitoring Group and the Panel of Experts on Somalia - 18 July 2007.* United Nations Security Council, July 18, 2007.
- Report of the Monitoring Group and the Panel of Experts on Somalia - 22 November 2006.* United Nations Security Council, November 22, 2006.
- Report of the Monitoring Group and the Panel of Experts on Somalia - 24 April 2008.* United Nations Security Council, April 24, 2008.
- Report of the Monitoring Group and the Panel of Experts on Somalia - 25 March 2003.* United Nations Security Council, March 25, 2003.
- Report of the Monitoring Group and the Panel of Experts on Somalia - 3 July 2002.* United Nations Security Council, July 3, 2002.
- Report of the Monitoring Group and the Panel of Experts on Somalia - 4 May 2006.* United Nations Security Council, May 4, 2006.
- Report of the Monitoring Group and the Panel of Experts on Somalia - 4 October 2005.* United Nations Security Council, October 4, 2005.
- Resolution 1725.* United Nations Security Council, December 6, 2006.
- Resolution 733.* United Nations Security Council, January 23, 1992.
- “Scores die in Ethiopia oil attack.” *BBC*, April 24, 2007, sec. Africa.  
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/6588055.stm>.
- Selassie, Bereket Habte. *The Making of the Eritrean Constitution*. Trenton, NJ: The Red Sea Press, Inc., 2003.
- Service for Life.* Human Rights Watch, April 16, 2009. <http://www.hrw.org/node/82284>.
- Shaw, Malcolm N. “Title, Control, and Closure? The Experience of the Eritrea-Ethiopia Boundary Commission.” *International and Comparative Law Quarterly* 56, no. 4 (2007): 755-796.
- Shultz, Richard H. *The Soviet Union and Revolutionary Warfare: Principles, Practices, and Regional Comparisons*. Stanford, Calif: Hoover Institution Press, Stanford University, 1988.
- “Somali forces push back militants.” *BBC*, March 5, 2011, sec. Africa.

- <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-12657466>.
- Somalia: The Tough Part Is Ahead*. Africa Briefing. Nairobi/Brussels: International Crisis Group, January 26, 2007.
- Somalia: To Move Beyond the Failed State*. Africa Report. Nairobi/Brussels: International Crisis Group, December 23, 2008.
- Somalia's Divided Islamists*. Africa Briefing. Nairobi/Brussels: International Crisis Group, May 18, 2010.
- Somalia's Islamists*. Africa Report. Nairobi/Brussels: International Crisis Group, December 12, 2005.
- Special Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea*. U.N. Security Council, April 7, 2008.
- Summary and Statistical Report of the 2007 Population and Housing Census*. Addis Ababa, Ethiopia: Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia Population Census Commission, December 2008.
- U.N. Security Council. *Security Council Resolution 1320*, September 15, 2000.
- . *Security Council Resolution 1827*, July 30, 2008.
- U.S. State Department. "08ASMARA543." Wikileaks. *Bio Notes on Eritrean President Isaias Afewerki*, November 12, 2008.
- <http://www.wikileaks.ch/cable/2008/11/08ASMARA543.html>.
- . "09ASMARA47." Wikileaks. *An Eritrean Overture to the United States*, February 9, 2009. <http://www.wikileaks.ch/cable/2009/02/09ASMARA47.html>.
- "UK anger as 'Iranian arms' seized." *BBC*, March 9, 2011, sec. UK.
- <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-12694266>.
- "UN imposes sanctions on Eritrea." *BBC*, December 23, 2009, sec. Africa.
- <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/8428881.stm>.
- United Nations Security Council. "Resolution 1907," December 23, 2009.
- "UNMEE: United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea," n.d.
- <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/past/unmee/index.html>.
- Wrong, Michela. *I Didn't Do It for You: How the World Betrayed a Small African Nation*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2005.
- Yohannes, Okbazghi. *Eritrea: A Pawn in World Politics*. Gainesville: University of Florida

Press, 1991.

Zegeye, Abebe, and Melakou Tegegn. "The Post-war Border Dispute between Ethiopia and Eritrea." *Journal of Developing Societies* 24, no. 2 (June 1, 2008): 245 -272.