

Panel 03: EAST AFRICA AND THE HORN

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From Brothers War to Border War
Conduct of an interstate war in the post- Cold War era:
Ethiopia- Eritrea (1998-2000)

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Paper title:

From Brothers War to Border War: conduct of an interstate war in the post- Cold War era [Ethiopia- Eritrea (1998-2000)]

Paper Abstract:

Interstate wars are not one of the most salient features of current World Politics. Indeed, the prevailing patterns of contemporary armed conflict show an increasing trend in intrastate wars that spill over borders. The paper aims to provide insights from an interstate war in the post-Cold War era to the debate on the transformation of warfare (Old vs. New Wars and their conduct).

Beyond the continuities with the 30 years civil war, namely in the relations between the two former insurgent movements, the Tigray People's Liberation Front(TPLF) and the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF), the 1998-2000 war was waged between the armed forces of two sovereign states. This is one of the few cases of interstate war in Africa

The case-study provides evidence to contradict the strand of the literature which claims that we are witnessing a decisive transformation of warfare (Van Creveld 1991);(Kaldor 1999).

The central claim of this paper is that neighbouring states fight over territory. The conduct of the war allows understanding under which circumstances is territory significant. The paper will start with a brief synopsis of the conflict followed by an analysis of the conduct of the war. A map of the contested areas and a timeline of recent developments from 5 October 2005 up to December 2005 are annexed.

The analysis of the conduct of the war confirms the centrality of territory to understand how the war unfolded and ended. As the war unfolded Badme² was transformed from a barren strip of land into an emblem and symbol of statehood. Indeed, territory is central to understanding not only the conduct, but also the causes and the outcomes of the 1998- 2000 interstate war. However, in the scope of this paper the main focus remains the conduct of the war. The May 2005 Elections in Ethiopia and recent developments, since October 2005, remind the significance of gathering data on the Final Round of Fighting (May- June 2000) and more specifically on the way the war was brought to an end (June 2000 Cease- fire). Finally, the conduct of the war shows that this classical 'Old War', in the post- Cold War era, displays characteristics highlighted in the 'New Wars' literature.

² Badme is one of the contested areas in the Western area along the disputed border. Badme is the trigger of the conflict. The initial dispute between Ethiopia and Eritrea over the administration of this village led to the killing of 4 Eritrean patrols near Badme on 6 May 1998. Dan Connell, 1999.

Synopsis of the war and its aftermath

In the aftermath of the overthrow of the Derg regime Ethiopia and Eritrea received considerable attention in international forums³. Both Meles Zenawi and Issaias Afewerki were praised as part of the promising New African leadership⁴.

Against this background, the drift of the political dispute, over the common border, into a military confrontation in May 1998 was received with a mixture of surprise and shock both at the national and international levels. On 13 May 1998 the Ethiopian parliament approved the Council of Ministers' statement warning that if Eritrean troops were not withdrawn from 'occupied' Ethiopian areas war would be inevitable⁵. As Tekeste Negash and Kjetill Tronvoll claim:

'In four weeks what had started as a minor border skirmish had escalated into a full-scale bilateral war- the first such war on the continent in decades⁶.'

The estimated number of total casualties far exceeds the 1.000 death threshold in any given year. Indeed, references to the total number of casualties range from 50.000 to 100.000⁷. After the 1998- 2000 War the World Bank financed two Projects for Demobilization and Reintegration in Ethiopia and Eritrea. The Projects aimed at reaching 150.000 and 200.000 soldiers respectively.

According to Franklin Steves the total number of displaced civilians is estimated to be 600.000. In addition, 75.000 Eritreans and Ethiopians of Eritrean origin were expelled from Ethiopia⁸.

On the follow up to the June 2000 Cease- fire, the parties signed a Comprehensive Peace Accord under the auspices of the OAU in Algiers on 12 December 2000.

Under the terms of the Peace Agreement the parties agreed on the deployment of a United Nations Peacekeeping Operation along a Temporary Security Zone (TSZ), on the creation of an independent Boundary Commission to settle the delimitation and demarcation of the contested border and on the establishment of a Claims Commission. The TSZ comprised an extension of 1000 km along the disputed border and further 25 km for a buffer zone between the two states.

The Security Council resolution 1320 (2000) authorized the establishment of a UN Mission (UNMEE), effective on 31 July 2000. The initial peacekeeping force of 4.200 was fully deployed by March 2001⁹.

³ The Derg regime is the term used to describe the socialist regime that was constituted after the Ethiopian Revolution of 1974. The Ethiopian Revolution toppled the imperial regime of Haile Selassie I. Finally in 1991 the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) and the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) triumphant march to Asmara and to Addis Abeba marked the overthrow of the military and socialist regime of Mengistu.

⁴ This tendency is best understood against the wave of optimism generated by the political transformations that began to sweep Africa in the late 1980s, culminating in the 1990s with the processes of democratic transition (or at least signs of political liberalization). Both Isaias Afewerki(EPLF)and Meles Zenawi (Tigray People's Liberation Front- TPLF) were taken as representatives of a new type of African leaders. Leonard A. Villalón and Phillip A. Huxtable, 1998.

⁵ Gilkes and Plaut. 1999. p. 25.

⁶ Tekeste Negash and Tronvoll, p.1.

⁷ Steves, 2003. A World Bank Report of May 6 2003 on the Ethiopia Demobilization and Reintegration Project includes 68,000 families of deceased soldiers. World Bank Report no. AC109, 6.05.2003.

⁸ Steves, 2003.

⁹ The peacekeeping force was downscaled to 3, 292 peacekeepers in 2005.

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Finally, on 13 April 2002 the Ethiopia and Eritrea Boundary Commission (EEBC) announced its ruling on the Boundary Delimitation. On 28 March 2003 the final decision of the Boundary Commission recognized the Eritrean claims to Badme. On November 2004 Ethiopia's Prime Minister announced that Ethiopia would accept in principle the EEBC decision, resume payment to the EEBC, and appoint field liaison officers to work on sites along the border with the EEBC on the demarcation process. To date the parties have failed to reach an agreement on the delimitation of the contested areas along the border let alone start the demarcation process.

The UN Secretary General in order to overcome the intransigence of the parties towards the EEBC decision appointed Lloyd Axworthy as his Special Envoy. This procedure was un- welcomed by Eritrea. Eritrea claimed that it would only resume diplomatic talks with Ethiopia once the latter would abide by the EEBC decision. Ethiopia claims that it would be ready to accept in principle the EEBC decision but curtailed any attempts towards the demarcation of the border without prior resume of diplomatic talks with Eritrean leadership. Each six months the United Nations Secretary General recommends an extension to the mission's mandate. The extensions have so far been authorized by the UN Security Council.

Introduction

The occurrence of an interstate war in the post- Cold War era is perceived as an exception in an international system where the salience of intra-state wars has been on the rise since the end of World War II¹⁰. Indeed, the low occurrence of this type of war led a group of scholars(Duffield, 2001, Kaldor, 1999) to endorse the 'New Wars' thesis. This approach deserves closer treatment in order to assess its explanatory power with regards to the major armed conflicts after the end of the Cold War. This strand of the literature on contemporary armed conflicts emerged within the major debate on the transformation of the nature of contemporary war (Van Creveld, 1991).

In the 'New Wars' literature the units that fight include different groups not corresponding to the vertically organized hierarchical units of conventional warfare. These units are composed by different types of groups ranging from paramilitary units, local warlords, criminal gangs, police forces and mercenary groups, to regular forces. In the Colonial wars of conquest the size of armies was also limited and composed by different types of groups ranging from trained European soldiers to the foot soldiers rounded up on the spot in the territories under conquest (Osterhammel, 1999).

The proponents of the 'new wars' thesis argue that in terms of the methods of warfare, the new wars draw on the experience of both guerrilla and counterinsurgency movements, but are distinctive as being essentially based upon; the instillation of fear among civilians, hatred, and predation. The authors fail to acknowledge that the colonial wars of conquest in 19th century Africa already combined characteristics defined in the post- Cold War 'New Wars' thesis. The colonial wars were also 'small wars',¹¹ forerunners, in this respect, of guerrilla wars. During the colonial wars of conquest the lack of any clear understanding of any political structure among the enemy led to a policy of intimidating the population. This entailed the raiding of cattle and the burning of villages¹². In addition, the levels of atrocities and violence described as new in the contemporary wars were also much

¹⁰The Uppsala Conflict Data Project for 2004 reported the non occurrence of any interstate war. SIPRI Yearbook 2004. SIPRI Stockholm International Peace and Research Institute www.sipri.org

¹¹ Osterhammel, J. (1999) p.43.

¹² In this period the influence of Sir Charles Callwell's handbook on 'Small Wars: their Principles and Practice' led to wars limited in means but absolute in aims. The methods were justified in face of the primitive nature of the opponent. Intimidation of the population was a common practice. Wessing, H. L. (1989), pp.1- 11.

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the same as in the colonial wars of conquest¹³. The colonial wars of conquest in Africa included methods of warfare that in Europe were morally and legally barred.

In the light of the current debate this paper will seek to analyse the conduct of the war between Ethiopia and Eritrea (classical interstate war) bearing in mind some of the questions pinpointed in the literature.

The section on the military and political dimensions of the conduct of the war will seek to address the following questions: to what extent did the engagement in the battle front involve only the conventional armed forces of the two states? What was the importance of the assistance by both belligerents to the non- state armed groups conducting insurgency operations against the ruling parties in the two countries? Was this support conducted simultaneously with the major offensives in the battle field? To what extent did the two armies only follow conventional warfare tactics? To what extent were civilians affected during the war? Was armed violence directly targeted at them?

The analysis of the regional dimensions of the conduct of the war assesses the following questions: As the war unfolded, to what extent did the parties provide support and/or become involved in the conflicts in the sub-region? Was there a regionalization of the conflict?

The economic, social and historical dimensions of the conduct of the war raise a further set of questions: Were there any economic incentives in the conduct of the war? What kept the war going? Was there any instrumentalization of ethnicity reflected in the conduct of the war? And were any old or new grievances associated with the conduct of the war? How did the mobilization succeed? In conclusion this sub- section will attempt to understand whether the lack of economically valuable resources had a favourable impact in bringing the war to an end after two and a half years of intense fighting. On the other hand, to what extent might the analysis lead to the conclusion that the predominance of social and historical grievances over greed explains more accurately the intensity, the course and the duration of the war?

Finally the section on territory will reflect on what the positions in the battle front show about the initial and final war aims. The way the war was fought and brought to an end further demonstrates the centrality of territory to understanding this particular war.

¹³ The practice of genocide, although an exception, was conducted by the German against the Herero and the Nama of South West Africa (1904- 1907). In Leopold's Congo hands and feet were chopped off in their hundreds. Idem, *ibidem*, p. 10

The analysis of the conduct of the war derives from the central assumption that the dichotomy between the old and new wars is overstated. In fact many of the 'old wars' never corresponded to the neat distinctions between combatants and civilians and state and non-state armed groups, conventional armed forces and irregular militia assumed in the 'new wars' literature .

The conduct of the war will show that the 'new' character of war is not universal. The occurrence of an interstate war in the post- Cold War era (said to be dominated by 'New Wars') provides further evidence to qualify central claims pursued in the ongoing debate. The chapter will conclude with the claim that, as in the case of Ethiopia and Eritrea, some of the ongoing armed conflicts, rather than anticipating the character of wars in the future, are reminiscent of the nineteenth century European wars of nationalism¹⁴ .

The war captures the simultaneity of two opposing dynamics in different regions (sub-regions) in the international system. The analysis of the causes and the analysis of the conduct of this interstate war further confirm the resilience of territorializing forces. The paradox between the centrality of territory in this major armed conflict and the porosity of borders in Africa further confirms the current inevitability of the coexistence in the system of territorializing and de-territorializing forces. The chapter will argue that, rather than a contradiction, this state of affairs shows how territory acquires salience whenever a territorial component of the sovereign state (especially in the case of a newly formed state) is under threat.

Military and Political conduct: from guerrilla warfare to conventional warfare and old vs new wars: an overstated dichotomy

First round of fighting (May- June 1998)

After the incident in the area of Badme on 6 May 1998 until 12 May 1998 the first incursions of Eritrean troops into Ethiopian territory were only stopped by irregular armed forces (militias).

In the case of Central Tigray the advancement of Eritrean troops was only stopped with the immediate call to ex- demobilized guerrilla fighters (mainly TPLF) and local militia.

¹⁴ The author acknowledges Fred Halliday's remarks with regards to the more universal character of this type of war in the post- Cold war environment.

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At this time the TPLF had 28.000 demobilized combatants. The majority were living in Tigray¹⁵. In addition to the demobilized TPLF combatants there were 50.000- 60.000 militias in the region. At this time the Ethiopian Defence Forces had only one Brigade in the whole of Tigray¹⁶. It is important to bear in mind that the demobilization processes had reached different outcomes in the two countries. Out of 95.000 fighters¹⁷ Eritrea never fully completed the demobilization of the 54.000¹⁸ targeted combatants. In Ethiopia the challenge to demobilize close to half a million soldiers¹⁹ of Mengistu's army and another 22.000 fighters of the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF)²⁰ was underway. In Ethiopia the combination of armed internal dissention with a substantive demobilization of both the Derg army and the ex-guerrilla fighters explains the absence of forces along its Northern border with Eritrea.

During the first offensive Eritrean troops held positions as far as Zalambessa. Shelling reached as far as Adigrat (25km from Zalambessa)²¹.

The demobilization process in Ethiopia after the overthrow of the Derg regime meant that the troops had been downscaled. The military were faced with a double challenge: re-mobilization and the deployment of larger contingents of troops in the border areas. In addition, the necessary supply routes had to be ensured. The logistical demands of the war showed that the presence of the state in remote areas in the periphery was limited at the time.

During this first round Eritrea had to its advantage two key factors: 1) strategic surprise and 2) the overwhelming military advantage with regards to mobilized and deployable troops. The first round of fighting was characterized by the Eritrean strategic Offensive and the Ethiopian strategic Defensive.

From June 1998 up to December 1998 both countries concentrated their efforts on the purchase or armaments. Ethiopia had to deal with the mobilization and training of the new conscripts. Only two incidents occurred during this period. The first one was reported by aid workers and took place in the western area near the border with Sudan. On 5 November 1998 Eritrean armed forces shelled Humera. The second incident was in Tsonona. On 17 December 1998 Ethiopian forces shelled the town killing 3 Eritrean soldiers²².

¹⁵ Interview with Senior High ranking officer. Ethiopia, August, 2005.

¹⁶ Approximately 3000 troops. The EDF units at this time were undersized. This number is just an estimate.

¹⁷ Amanuel Mehreteab, 2002. Kingma, K. 2000, p.7

¹⁸ This value includes 13.500 women (25%). Bruchhaus and Amanuel Mehreteab, 2000, p. 103.

¹⁹ This value refers to a total of 455.000 ex- combatants including returnees from refugee camps in Sudan (52.000) and Kenya (80.000). Dercon, S. and Daniel Ayalew, 1998, p. 134. Colletta, N. J. et al., 1996, p.4.

²⁰ Coletta et al. refer to the demobilization of a total of 21.200 fighters from the OLF, which included 20% of women fighters. Idem, p. 2.

²¹ Gilkes and Plaut. 1999. pp. 27-31

²² Gilkes and Palut, idem, p.33.

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From the first round of fighting it became clear that the parties were not willing to reach an agreement at the diplomatic internationally mediated talks. The stalemate in the diplomatic front reflected the stalemate in the battlefield.

Second Round of Fighting (February 1999 up to the rainy season August 1999)

The Second Round was characterized by the Ethiopian counter- Offensive launched in February 1999. This Offensive came to be know as ‘ Operation Sunset’. The bulk of the units that composed the EDF were mobilized to Badme. The first Ethiopian attempt to seize Badme on 6 February 1999 failed. On 26 February 1999 after intense fighting Ethiopian forces breached through the Eritrean lines and captured Badme, Ethiopia had a clear advantage in terms of airpower. The aim of this operation was to overcome the previous stalemate. The outcome pointed to a reversal of the strategic positions of the belligerents. The operation comprised synchronization of the infantry with the air force. The Infantry movements were supported by helicopters and Airforce artillery. The infantry operations were supported by tank attacks. Eritrea subsequently tried to re-capture Badme. But the 3 counter-offensives failed²³.

During this phase one of the fiercest battles was waged in Tsorona. Ethiopia’s attempt to breach through the Eritrean lines failed.

The outcome of these two major Battles confirmed the stalemate on the battlefield. Ethiopia’s advantage in Badme was curtailed by Eritrea’s advantage in Tsorona. Up to this point Eritrean fighters were still convinced that they could win the war²⁴.

Third Round of Fighting and Ethiopian Final Offensive(May 2000 up to the June 2000 Cease-Fire)

Between September 1999 and May 2000 the fighting was interrupted. This truce coincides with the period of major diplomatic activity and preparations for war.

In the final offensive Ethiopian tactics reflected Addis Ababa's claimed aim of recapturing Ethiopian territory that was under Eritrean occupation.

However, anecdotal evidence points to disagreements between the core group close to the Prime Minister and the military leadership over the final aims of the war.

Ethiopia opened a new front breaching the Eritrean lines in the south-west border with Eritrea via Humera. The Ethiopian troops captured Om Hajer, advancing towards

²³ Martin Plaut. ‘ The Conflict and its Aftermath’. In D. Jacquin- Berdal and M. Plaut. (eds.) 2005.

²⁴ Dan Connell claimed that: ‘Most frontline fighters saw the conflict as a second battle for Eritrea’s survival as a nation’ .Dan Connell, 1999.

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Tesseney with minor resistance. After military engagement in this town the Ethiopian forces then advanced to Barentu. From Barentu, the Ethiopian army moved north-east towards Agordat, while the main advance continued to parallel to the border towards Mendefera²⁵. From there it would have been possible to reach Asmara.

But the question of the failure to re- capture Assab remains unsatisfactorily documented. It cannot be suggested that international pressure prevented Meles Zenawi to agree to give the order to the troops to advance towards Assab²⁶. From a military perspective it has been suggested that the nature of the terrain would have implied a great risk in terms of casualties. What decided the outcome in the eastern front was the military inability to break the enemy line. The cost and the risk of the operation prevented the taking over of the port of Assab. The decision was based more on military than political considerations²⁷. But this outcome is still not clear and the evidence available confirms that the aim of the final offensive was to recapture territory previously held by Ethiopia.

After this offensive the parties agreed to sign the cease- fire and further talks for a Peace Agreement were finally given a positive sign. However why did the Eritreans capitulate if they were among the most enduring liberation movements in Sub- Saharan Africa? It may well have been the case that the intensity of violence was overwhelming to both parties. Indeed, almost as many soldiers died in two years of war, on the three main fronts, as irregular and regular armed forces and civilians during the thirty years insurgency war. Although there is no agreement on the number of total casualties, SIPRI estimates that the 1962-88 civil war led to: 45.000 military and 50.000 civilian casualties. The border war, in just two years, led to 70.000 up to 100.000 military casualties on both sides.

This section demonstrates that even in the case of a conventional war waged between the armed forces of sovereign states the military conduct of the war displays some of the features highlighted in the New Wars literature. In addition the conduct of the war suggests that the key distinctions established between old and new wars are exaggerated. The intensity

²⁵ Patrick Gilkes, 'Free rein for Eritrean opposition', BBC News Online: World: Africa, Tuesday, 23 May, 2000

²⁶ Meles Zenawi dealings with the international community of donors, especially after the May 2005 elections clearly show that the PM reserves a considerable margin of manoeuvre to prevent external pressure from influencing the course of 'internal' events. Assab is still perceived as an Ethiopian territorial possession for considerable margins of the public opinion. The extent to which free access to Assab was important to the core group close to the PM is insufficiently discussed and researched. This key question needs further consideration. The time is not ripe to obtain data on the eastern sector (Front). All is unclear on the Eastern Front. In addition, during the period of highest tension in the post-Algiers era, November 2005, non- specified numbers of Ethiopian troops entered the Temporary Security Zone along the Bure- Bada road. Assab remains a key unanswered question.

²⁷ Military Assistant temporarily deployed with the Multi- National Standby Force High Readiness Brigade for UN Operations SHIRBRIG in Ethiopia and Eritrea after the June 2000 Cease- Fire. Interview with the author, London, March 2005.

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of violence raises as many questions and astonishment as the level of atrocities resulting from the new wars tactics. The resulting death toll of trench warfare invokes memories of the worst outrages of WWI. The military conduct of the war and the balance of forces in the battle field reflect the political positioning of the parties in the internationally mediated diplomatic front. As the war unfolded the initial aims and motivations changed.

Martin Van Creveld²⁸ defends that we may be witnessing the end of an era of 'Clausewitzian warfare' based on the distinction between government, army and people. However, as Anthony W. Pereira suggests:

'To what extent was the Clausewitzian paradigm ever dominant? Haven't irregular armed forces always been a feature of war-making? (...) Perhaps even at the height of the Clausewitzian era in Europe, the armed forces that could fight wars according to Clausewitzian dictums were the exception rather than the rule and could be effectively challenged by irregular armies. It therefore seems more plausible that 21st century war, at least so far, has reconfigured elements of conventional and irregular warfare, rather than moved decisively from one to the other²⁹.'

This case of interstate war further confirms that this is the case in the post- Cold War environment.

Regional: Horn of Africa's states and the long practice of external interference in each others internal affairs

The regional dynamics are assessed in order to understand the influence of neighbouring countries (mainly Sudan) both in the war between Ethiopia and Eritrea and with regards to the support to internal opposition groups to the two governments. However, the consideration of the regional actors will remain peripheral as the paper aim is limited to examine to what extent it is plausible to consider that they influenced the conduct of the war and in turn were influenced by the war under inquiry.

In the case of Ethiopia and Eritrea, each of the warring parties provided support to each others armed groups. The neighbouring states changed their alliances according to the conjectural interests unleashed by the war between the two former allies. However, the neighbouring countries did not directly support any of the parties. At least in the case of Sudan it is plausible to suggest that the government benefited from the end of the alliance between the Ethiopian and Eritrean leadership. Indeed, after the first round of fighting

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Van Creveld, M. (1991) *The Transformation of War*, The Free Press, N.Y.

29

Pereira, A. W. (2003) In *Irregular Armed Forces and Their Role in Politics and State Formation*(Ed, Davis, D. E., and, Pereira, Anthony W.) Cambridge University Press, Cambridge., p. 393

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Ethiopia rebuilt its relations with the Sudanese government. As a consequence of this breakthrough, according to Dan Connell, in January 1999 Sudan launched a major offensive against its opposition forces (which were backed by Eritrea) in two areas³⁰. Ethiopia started a rapprochement with Eritrean opposition forces and created conditions for them to set up bases and operate from its territory³¹.

This pattern of relations between regional states is neither specific to Africa nor can it be defined as a new characteristic of states' behaviour after the end of the Cold War. Indeed, in the Middle East one can observe a similar pattern of interference and intervention of the states in each other's internal affairs³².

In addition this pattern of mutual intervention in internal affairs challenges the approaches that tend to place the primacy of security dynamics in Africa at the domestic level³³. Both international and domestic factors shape the outcomes, contributing to the complex in- flux security architecture of the region.

Conduct: Economic and social dimensions

One ongoing debate in the literature on contemporary armed conflicts points to the inevitable tension between greed factors and grievances as the key motivations to wage armed force in intra-state wars. The empirical evidence collected dismisses the predominance of greed factors in the present case study³⁴. However, economic incentives and resentments still played a role. The demobilisation processes in the two countries led to difficulties with regards to the re-integration of the demobilized combatants into civilian life after almost three decades of armed struggle either on behalf of the insurgency movements or on behalf of the armed forces of the Derg regime. It may well be suggested that among this segment in both countries some may have found appeal in joining the call to arms in the absence of better alternatives in civilian life. This observation confirms that even when economic factors play a role they need to be taken into account as part of a complex interaction with other grievances related to cleavages in the social formations of both countries (Keen, 2000).

Interestingly enough when the Eritrean forces first entered Ethiopian territory destruction and pillage followed. In the final Ethiopian offensive, deep inside Eritrean territory, destruction, pillage and looting also took place. Indeed, the tactics used by both belligerents correspond to common tactics of modern warfare. The aim was to penetrate the

³⁰ Dan Connell, 1999, p.5

³¹ Idem, p.5

³² Halliday, F., 2005, p.39.

³³ Buzan, B., and Ole, Waever, 2003.

³⁴ Paul Collier initiated this trend on the literature on contemporary armed conflicts to place emphasis in the economic over- determination of both the conduct and protracted nature (duration). Collier, 2000.

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enemy's territory, invade and not to withdraw without leaving sufficient destruction to compromise the enemy's development in years to come. But, unlike many of the protracted ongoing civil wars, this was a high intense and short interstate war. This may explain the relatively minor impact of greed factors in the resumption of arms. In 2004 among the 19 major ongoing armed conflicts only 3 were relatively new. The rest had endured for at least a decade³⁵. The key debate on the greed vs. grievances conditioning of the armed groups acquires significance in cases when the duration and the protracted nature of the conflicts is clearly related to the predatory nature of the belligerents' aims. In the case of Ethiopia and Eritrea the economic motivations to continue the war were absent. However, economic resentments over Eritrea's introduction of a new currency, the nature of the trade agreements with Eritrea and the perception of a clear disadvantage in Ethiopia's terms of access to Assab had a clear impact on the conduct of the war. Indeed, the polarization around the Ethiopian army's failure to capture Assab cannot be understood without taking into consideration greed factors as incentives for armed violence. The financing of the war placed a further burden in the economic budget of the two countries and compromised, especially in the Eritrean case, the development plans set up in the aftermath of independence. The other areas of occupied and disputed territory had no known valuable resources.

After Eritrea's political independence, Eritreans living in Ethiopia and wishing to remain were entitled to dual nationality. The border dispute and the war that followed brought the nationality question into the limelight. The definition of who was an Ethiopian and who was an Eritrean in mutually exclusive terms became critical with the border war. As it is well documented, the precipitate consideration of this key question led to massive expulsions under conditions heavily criticised by NGOs of both the local emerging civil society and also those with global reach³⁶.

The redefinition of citizenship prior to the war had already led to expulsions of Ethiopian citizens from Eritrea. Although the conditions under which the operation was carried were far from meeting acceptable human rights standards, the problem was not emphasised in public debate. By early 1999 more than 50.000 Eritreans had been deported from Ethiopia. Both the Geneva Conventions and other relevant international law sources place the governments at odds with the humane values acceptable for the treatment of civilians said to belong to the enemy country during hostilities³⁷.

In the third offensive of the war civilians in Barentu (Eritrea) were targeted by both belligerents. To a certain extent this practice is in line with the 'new war' style consideration

³⁵ SIPRI Yearbook 2004.

³⁶ Asmerom Legesse/ Citizens for Peace. 1999; Amnesty International, 1999. Human Rights Watch, 2003.

³⁷ Amnesty International, *ibidem*. Human Rights Watch. *ibidem*.

of civilians as direct targets of armed violence. Even in old wars, and especially in a classical case of interstate war in the post- cold war environment, civilians were often not treated according to the Geneva Conventions.

Impact of Historical grievances on the conduct of the war

During the conduct of hostilities the existence of many websites and on- line forums for discussion allowed the mobilisation and involvement of a key external constituency of the two states: the diaspora. Federica Guazzini has worked extensively on this dimension of the conflict (Guazzini, 2004).

The analysis of how the different media during war played on alleged grievances to fuel the war propaganda strongly confirms the significance of analysing the relationship between war reporting and the manipulation of social identities (Allen, 1999, Pottier, 2002)³⁸. It is of particular interest to the understanding of the war to note the extent to which historical representations and memories were reified in order to justify the war.

The conduct of the war on the military front was accompanied by an increasing discursive saliency of historical grievances that had long remained silenced. Three historical themes re-merged during the conflict: 1) the comparison between the victory against the Italians in 1896 in the Battle of Adwa and the victory against the Eritreans in February 1999 in Operation Sunset; 2) the definition of the Eritrean enemy dating back to the involvement of Eritrean troops, the well known 'ascaris', in the Italian occupation of Ethiopia on World War II and, 3) the rehabilitation of the EPRDF/ TPLF as the bearers of a long tradition of Ethiopian unity when the sovereignty of the state is at stake in face of external threats.

Badme, the sparking point of the conflict, was soon to achieve to the same standing of Adwa, the key location of heroic Ethiopian resistance during the 19th century's scramble for Africa by the major European powers. As the war unfolded the importance attached to the areas under dispute increased. According to Alessandro Triulzi, the deliberate co-incident of the celebrations of the victory at Adwa and the Ethiopian successful re- capture of Badme reflects this intentional definition of the interstate war as the 'second Adwa'. Triulzi notes:

' (...) the war freely unleashed an anti- Eritrean 'colonial memory' which till then had been repressed or removed. The war allowed attaching new symbolic meanings to an enduring site of memory'³⁹.

³⁸ The Ethiopian propaganda relied more on the historical basis for the definition of a different Eritrean national identity than on ethnicity.

³⁹ Triulzi. 2002, p.99.

The author suggests that the war propaganda reflects a much broader resentment against Eritrea's independence. In clear contrast to the Federation period, during the war it was common to find in the media references to the participation of Eritreans in Italy's successful campaign that led to 7 years of occupation of Ethiopia⁴⁰.

The conduct of the war and the use of propaganda to portray the enemy clearly show how grievances are powerful incentives to rally support. Manly the exploited grievances on the Ethiopian side were the historical ones that associated Eritrea (and especially Eritreans who sided with the Italians) with Italian colonial presence in the Horn of Africa. The historical grievances were used as powerful tools both to justify and rally support to the course of action after the initial outbreak of hostilities.

According to A. Triulzi the calculated match of the celebrations of the two war events led to the common classification of the Battle of Badme as the Second Adwa⁴¹. If we follow the contemporary popular belief/ discourse, and equate the symbolic meaning of Badme to Adwa, it is well worth remembering that the memorial raised in Adwa to celebrate the famous 1896 Battle could not be less visible for the common visitor. However, its very existence consolidates and passes from generation to generation the historical meaning of that founding moment of resistance of the Ethiopian modern state and the consolidation of Ethiopia's sovereign state boundaries. Badme can only be equated with Adwa to the extent that it represents a key event in the delimitation and demarcation of the colonial inherited borders in the Horn of Africa. Rather than opening the Pandora's box of the colonial inherited borders in Africa, it has brought to our attention the importance of an overlooked dimension in most of the contemporary armed conflicts: territory⁴². The case- study reminds us that political independence should be legitimized with the full achievement of an agreement over the delimitation and demarcation of borders.

The war propaganda explicitly played on grievances inherited from the period of the European scramble for Africa, and more specifically Italy's attempt to colonize Ethiopia, and of the Italian occupation of Ethiopia on the lead up to World War Two. During the Federation years, immediately after the Italian occupation, and especially with the annexation of Eritrea as an Ethiopian Province, any mention of Eritrean collaboration with Italian troops was

⁴⁰ Ibidem. p.97.

⁴¹ Ibidem, p.94

⁴²SIPRI recognizes prominence both to government and territory as main causes of contemporary armed conflicts. The data collected by this Institute result in high standard analysis, and accurate identification of patterns and trends of major armed conflicts. SIPRI Yearbook 2004.

simply silenced. With the war the ' ascaris' were again brought to the limelight as key players alongside the Italian troops in ensuring the Italian occupation of Ethiopia⁴³.

Territorial conduct: how the positions in the battle fronts changed the local practices and conceptions of the boundaries and led to the entrenchment of the border

Since Eritrea's political independence and up to the outbreak of hostilities the local conceptions of the boundaries between Eritrea and Ethiopia had not changed the practices of local inhabitants. The communities in the borderlands continued to intermarry, visit relatives on both sides of the border and to many, especially in the Central Sector, the option to go to market was measured in terms of walking distances irregardless of its location in Ethiopia or Eritrea. For those living near the border around Ayga, Maechea it would be more common to go to the market in Senafe (Eritrea) than to Adigrat (Ethiopia)⁴⁴. Similar considerations conditioned the decisions of those living on the Eritrean side of the border. In fact, Eritreans living nearby the border in places as Monoxeito would come to the market in Zalambessa (1, 5 hours walking distance) or to Adigrat (Ethiopia) rather than to Senafe (Eritrea). In continuity with this daily practice, when the fighting erupted Ethiopians⁴⁵ living in the Tigray region were displaced and sought shelter and safe hiding places in Eritrea. It is interesting to note that those affected directly (displaced) by the war, at least during the first round of fighting, would not feel threatened in Eritrea⁴⁶. However, as the war grew in intensity, and especially after the second and third rounds of fighting, considerations of personal safety led them to seek alternatives to return to Ethiopia. The intensity of the fighting on the battlefield, and the degree of surveillance in the battlefront area, changed local conceptions and practices with regards to the Eritrean- Ethiopian border.

It is not uncommon to hear in the Tigray region, from people identified with different ethnic groups, or from Tigrayans in Addis Abeba that :

'We and the Eritreans are the same people. But now we are separated because of the closure of the border'⁴⁷.

The conduct of the war impacted on local conceptions of the boundaries predominantly based on its fluidity, permeability and porosity. The introduction of the Eritrean currency (Nakfa) had already started the process of transformation of the border. The trench lines built along the border imposed an external conception which had an impact on

⁴³ A. Triulzi, 2002.

⁴⁴ Various Interviews with anonymous from border areas both in Ethiopia and Eritrea. Anonymous from border areas Central Sector (Eritrea). Asmara, August 2004. Anonymous from border areas Central Sector (Ethiopia), Tigray, Ethiopia, July 2005.

⁴⁵ And not necessarily Ethiopians of the Tigrayan ethnic group

⁴⁶ Interviews with the author. Asmara July 2004 and Adigrat July 2005.

⁴⁷ Interviews with the author. Addis Abeba, Mekele and Adigrat, July 2005.

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local conceptions and practices. The boundaries became entrenched around notions of obstruction, obstacle and interdiction⁴⁸. In one of the first accounts of the conflict Abbink claimed that the war sealed the irreversible secession of Eritrea from Ethiopia⁴⁹. This process was effectively sealed with the closure of the border and with its transformation into the main theatre of the conflict.

Although liberal views on the globalization process tend to advocate an image of an increasingly borderless world, what one witnesses is an increasing salience of re-territorialisation trends in the system. If we could advance the argument further, even in industrial and post- industrial societies the empirical evidence seems to confirm that rather than borders becoming meaningless they are being displaced and have different meanings according to the way sovereignty is being re-invented and transformed. In the case of Ethiopia and Eritrea the war was as much about Badme as Assab. The conduct of the war shows that Badme was key for Ethiopia to reassert its unity both within the political community and outside with regards to Eritrea. Assab and the divergent positions over the legitimacy of Ethiopian claims to its ownership challenge the segments of Ethiopian society to come to terms with Eritrean independence and its implications for Ethiopia. The loss of Assab is now more resented than the loss of Eritrea. The disaffected segments within Ethiopia's social formation that were polarised around Eritrea's independence are finally reconciled with the idea of the Eritrean other. In a context of full and mutual advantageous cooperation between the two countries the loss of Assab could have the potential to become less and less of a dividing question.

The interstate war between Ethiopia and Eritrea shows that scholars working within the globalization approach⁵⁰ proclaimed too early the death of traditional forms of sovereign statehood, and especially the centrality of territory and borders to the definition of the sovereign state. It should be noted that the difficulty of applying International Relations theory to analyse the state in Africa derives from the assumption that the Westphalian system of states would be fully consolidated after less than five decades of Independence. Indeed, more than the failure of this transplant, states in Africa operate within a pre- Westphalian system of sovereign states⁵¹. However, the post- colonial states have taken root and made the institutions of sovereignty, territoriality and the right of self-determination their own central

⁴⁸ Various interviews with anonymous both in Tigray and Addis Abeba. July 2003 and July 2005. This situation is in no sense peculiar and exclusive to the Ethiopian- Eritrean boundary. For a very interesting reflection on external and African conceptions on boundaries refer to Miles, 2005.

⁴⁹ Abbink, 1998. p.562

⁵⁰ Held and others claim that : the contemporary era is marked by a deterritorialization of politics , rule and governance, although new forms of territorialization, such as regionalism , are evident as well'. Held et al., 1999.

⁵¹ Engel, U. a., Gorm Rye Olsen, (ed.), 2005, p. 16

premise. As Buzan argues this, in turn, allowed IR theories that were essentially rooted in European history to be, with some justification, applied on a global scale⁵².

The centrality of territory to understand the transformation of the war aims and the way the war was brought to an end further confirm the applicability of IR theoretical approaches to this region. The war between Ethiopia and Eritrea in particular fits within a realist theoretical framework, with its emphasis on interstate wars over territory (Andreas, 2003)⁵³.

Conclusion

The paper is critical to understanding how the conduct of the war led to a transformation of the importance attached to each of the causes of the War⁵⁴. Further the conduct of the war led to the transformation of the war aims at various levels.

The new wars thesis sought to deepen our understanding of contemporary armed conflicts. However, the characteristics defined as new in some cases correspond to old patterns of armed conflict. The difference is in magnitude rather than in the nature of organized violence.

As the paper showed, the exceptional nature of the occurrence of this type of war is tied to the creation of a new state after the end of the Cold War. Indeed, the conduct of the war only confirms that the war bears resemblance with 19th century wars of nationalism.

The outbreak of hostilities, and the intensity of the violence on the battle fronts during the two years war, raised acutely the question of nationalities. With the national question at the forefront, the re-definition of citizens of both states ensued. The right of Eritreans living in Ethiopia to dual- citizenship ceased and led to the expulsions of those who failed to provide the evidence requested. The Ethiopians from the border areas seeking refuge in Eritrea during the war increasingly faced discriminatory treatment to the point of fearing for their own safety (fear of retaliatory measures increased specifically after the last offensive) and finally were forced to return to Ethiopia.

From the outbreak of hostilities until the cease- fire was finally signed, significant changes took place at various levels.

⁵² Buzan, 'Preface', 2005.

⁵³ Peter Andreas shows how the importance of territoriality persists in the 'North' but with a clear shift of emphasis. The author shows convincing evidence, mainly from post- industrial societies, to support the claim that simultaneously to increasing demilitarization and economic liberalization of borders more intensive border law enforcement is implemented. This trend acquired particular saliency after 9.11. Andreas, 2003.

⁵⁴ For further details on the Origins of the War the author conducted an extensive literature review and developed the mapping of the conflict included on a chapter of the PhD Dissertation. This paper draws extensively on work in progress for the completion of the Dissertation.

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Badme, from a barren strip of land, was transformed into a second Adwa, ie, new symbolic meanings from an enduring site of memory were attached to Badme. The only way out of the stalemate would be to construct a Battle Memoir praising the Unknown Soldiers from both countries as a sign of reconciliation and prospects for cooperation between the two contiguous neighbouring countries. Further, the victory in the final offensive marked the end of a major war of national identity and the beginning of a new cycle of state formation and consolidation of supremacy in the region of the Horn.

The importance of territorial integrity is perceived as a key asset for the survival of African states. The repeated interference and intervention of Horn of Africa's states in each other's armed conflicts is more likely to occur in cases that represent no challenge to the inherited borders from colonialism. This hypothesis holds in the case of Ethiopia and Eritrea. The ability of neighbouring countries to influence the course of events is entirely dependent upon the warring parties. This interference plays a secondary role, however, when compared to the key influence of external actors in bringing the hostilities to an end. Indeed, the disputes over the ill- defined nature of borders in this sub- region tend to lead to high intensity and short duration interstate wars (Somalia- Ethiopia and Eritrea- Ethiopia) or interstate disputes Djibouti- Eritrea and Yemen- Eritrea. As the war unfolded, and although this corresponds to a classical case of interstate war, both domestic and regional politics affected the course of the war. The regionalization of the conflict by the intervention of neighbouring states is more likely to happen when the conflict is being fought over control of government than over territory. However, the support to armed opposition groups to the leadership of the two countries was only possible via the use of the territory of third countries, especially Sudan.

The extent to which the war represents the beginning of a new cycle of state formation and consolidation of supremacy in the region of the Horn needs to be considered in greater detail⁵⁵. The way the war was brought to an end had clear implications on the outcomes of the war. The analysis of the relationship between war and state formation in Africa at the light of the case study will be the underlying concern of further work on the outcomes of the war⁵⁶.

⁵⁵ The analysis of the outcomes of the war receives treatment in two chapters of the dissertation.

⁵⁶ As mentioned before this paper is part of chapter four of the PhD Dissertation under completion. The title of the thesis is: An interstate war in the post- Cold War era: Ethiopia and Eritrea (1998- 2000).

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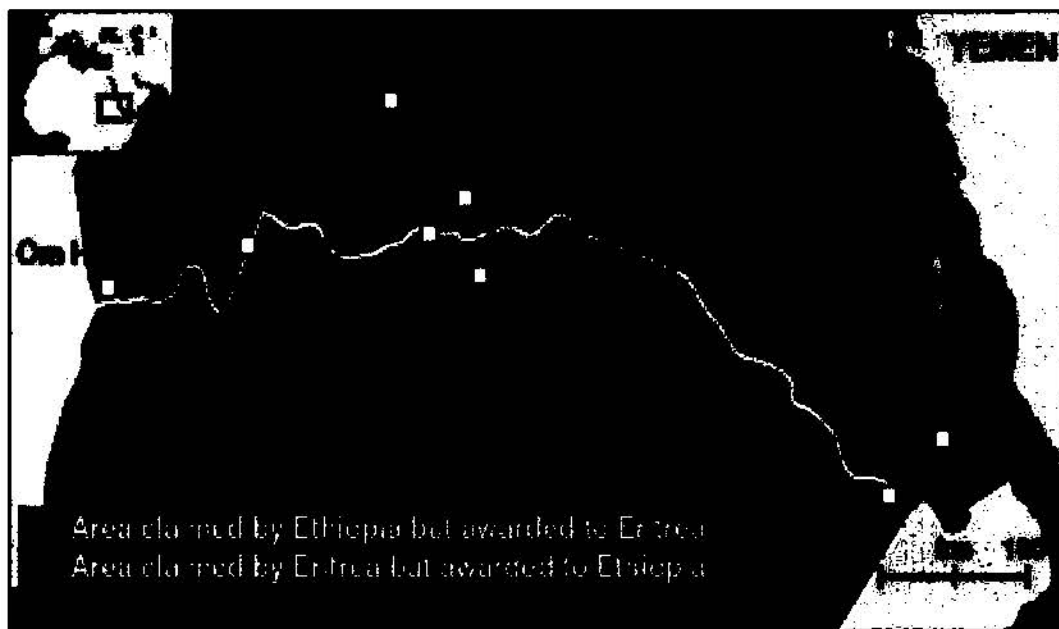
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Annexe i: Map of the contested border



Source: www.news.bbc.co.uk

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Annexe ii: Timeline of recent developments (5 October 2005 up to 12 December 2005)

International: Border Eth.Eri.(UNMEE)	Domestic Politics Eth.	Regional: Eri.- Sudan Eth- Sudan
<p>5 Oct Eritrea banned UNMEE helicopters flights</p>	<p>1 Nov Riots in Addis Abeba (Killings) 3 Nov Eid celebrations</p>	<p>Eri- Sudan Sudanese delegation led by Lt. Gen. Silva Kiir (Sudan First- Vice President and President of South Sudan Government)visit to Asmara Outcome: Talks on re-Opening the border closed for last 3 years (since 2002)</p>
<p>Eritrea prohibited UN vehicles from patrolling at night from the Eritrean side of the border UNMEE response to Eritrea's restrictions: withdrawal from 18 out of 40 monitoring posts along the BORDER</p>	<p>7 Nov. Opposition leaders appear before special Court previously created to trial members of the Derg. Berhanu Nega, Eng. Hailu Shawel and Prof. Wolde Ab Mariam</p>	<p>28 Nov. Ethiopia and Sudan agreed to cooperate in the keeping of peace and security along their common border.The agreement was signed in the Ethiopian town of Gonder</p>
<p>4 Nov AU issued statement on the deterioration of the situation in the border</p>		
<p>9 Nov PM MZ issued statement that Eth. would not initiate war</p>		
<p>22 Nov UN in Asmara issued order for staff to evacuate families</p>		
<p>24 Nov UNSC threatened economic sanctions on both countries. The two countries should pull back forces to the positions kept until December 2004. In addition Er. Should lift the ban on UNMEE's helicopters flights.</p>		
<p>25 Nov meeting in Nairobi Military Coordination Commission UNMEE Eritrea's Colonel Zecarias Ogbagaber Major-General Yohannes Gebremeskel of Ethiopia</p>		

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<p>Nov 26 Eritrea declared the Security Council Resolution No.1640/2005 as illegal and accused the ' International community' of failing to exert pressure on Ethiopia to accept the EEBC final and binding decision</p>		
<p>29 Nov info released by IRIN Blast in TSZ When: 22 Nov Where: Central Sector Road Sembel - Badme Casualties: 4 Ethiopian soldiers killed and 3 wounded Where: Blast Southern adjacent area (Eth. Side) Another incident Dibbi Village sub- zoba Tsorena Central Sector</p>		
<p>7 Dec Eritrea ordered the expulsion of UNMEE peacekeepers from EU, Canada, USA, Russia (total 200, 18 out of total 40 nationalities in the mission) within 10 days</p>		
<p>10 Dec Ethiopian Foreign Minister (Seyoum Mesfin) made a public statement that Ethiopia would pull back troops from the border to downscale the military presence to December 2004 levels.</p>		
<p>12 Dec IRIN informed that estimates suggested that 380.000 troops were stationed on the adjacent areas to the TSZ (130.000 Eth.; 250.000 Er.) plus tens of thousand of militias. Already in Feb. 2005 UN had showed concern over military build up along the border. On 25 April 2005 UNMEE warned that Ethiopia had 7 additional Divisions stationed 20 to 45 km from the Southern Boundary of the TSZ. IRIN estimated that since Dec 2004 Ethiopia moved closed to the border approximately 50.000 troops (8 Divisions) comprising tanks, missiles and other military hardware.</p>		
<p>12 Dec announcement of a mission of two UN key representatives to Asmara to meet the PFDJ leadership/ Eri: Jean- Marie Guehenno and Gen. Radir Kumar Mehta.</p>		
<p>EU announced that it would send a special mission to meet the leadership of the two countries on 17 Dec. The EU mission will be led by Britain's Africa Minister Lord David Triesman</p>		

Sources:

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