

# Analysis

## State making in the Horn of Africa: notes on Eritrea and prospects for the end of violent conflict in the Horn

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*This paper looks at the Eritrean state-making process in light of the 1998–2000 Eritreo-Ethiopian war and its aftermath. Three historical layers are discussed as determining the workings of the present Eritrean state. Their most important legacies are concerns around territorial integrity coupled with a deep mistrust of the international community, and a political system based on mobilisation coupled with authoritarian control. The war had two major consequences for the Eritrean polity: It led to many ruptures within the state, and it re-enforced deeply*

*held suspicions towards the main international actors engaged in finding a sustainable solution. The latter's involvement has resulted in a stalemate. Looking into the future, in a best-case scenario, pressure will be put on Ethiopia to accept once and for all its boundary with Eritrea as defined by international law. At the same time, this could open the way for domestic change towards constitutional government in Eritrea. At present, lacking a base for mutual engagement, future prospects for both countries, but more so for Eritrea, look bleak.*

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## Introduction

When in May 1998 Eritrea and Ethiopia went to war over what was on the face of it a piece of barren territory along their common border, it took many observers by surprise. Both countries had until then been regarded as a model for African development, succeeding in reconstructing war-devastated economies, restoring stability, and symbolising a new style of politics in post Cold War Africa. The common verdict on what rapidly escalated into the first full-scale bilateral war on the African continent for decades was ‘senseless’, and the cliché of ‘two bold man fighting over a comb’ was invoked more than once.<sup>1</sup>

The following will argue that, far from being ‘senseless’, the Eritreo-Ethiopian war of 1998–2000 is deeply grounded in the types of states that have developed in the Horn of Africa. More generally, it needs to be understood within the wider dynamics of conflict in a region characterised by contested borders between and within states, as well as prolonged intra-state-violence and proxy wars threatening not only governments but the survival of states themselves.<sup>2</sup>

This paper will look at those issues taking as its point of departure the Eritrean state-making process. A state is conceived here as consisting of different layers of varying importance to current state capability, each layer stemming from a particular historic period that established sets of institutions, organisational structures, codes of behaviour and a general set of rules and values.<sup>3</sup> In order to understand the workings of the present State of Eritrea, including its territorial policies, those layers need to be unpacked and understood.

In doing so, two concepts are revived as particularly useful: *empirical statehood* and *juridical statehood*. Whereas *empirical statehood* rests—in Weberian tradition—on whether a national government can lay claim to a monopoly of force in the territory under its jurisdiction, for many new states in Africa—including Eritrea, as we shall see in due course - *juridical statehood* proved far more fundamental: *Juridical* attributes of *statehood* are territory and independence. Within international law, determinate and recognised frontiers are the essential attribute of any state—indeed, a polity may possess the *empirical* qualifications for *statehood*, but without the *juridical* attributes of territory and independence, it is not a state.<sup>4</sup>

As will become clear when looking in more detail at the layers of Eritrean statehood, it is the claim to *juridical statehood* that lies at the heart of how Eritrea is positioning itself

within the political geography of the Horn and beyond. Moreover, the failure of the international community to act as a guarantor for Eritrean *juridical statehood* prevents a lasting solution to the latest violent confrontation between Eritrea and Ethiopia.

### *Historical layers behind the Eritrean state*

The different layers that have led to the emergence of the State of Eritrea as we see it today include the following: Eritrea as an Italian colony and subsequent British administration (1890–1952); Eritrea as a territory within Ethiopia—the federation and annexation periods; and the revolutionary state in waiting; as a result of those legacies the independent State of Eritrea came into being in 1993.<sup>5</sup>

While it is beyond the scope of this article to discuss those periods in detail,<sup>6</sup> their legacy is important to understand the Eritrean polity today.

Within the broader context of the Horn of Africa, the Ethiopian ruling elite has for centuries seen their country as the regional hegemon and subscribed to a narrative of history that projects a unified territory and identity from a distant past into an equally distant future. An essential part of this territorial identity was the *kebesa*, the highland area of Eritrea, inhabited mainly by ethnic Tigrinya, as is Ethiopia's northern province of Tigray. Within this scenario, Italian colonialism was the rupture that provided the starting point for the establishment of a distinct Eritrean identity and a juridical claim to territorial statehood. One important legacy of Italian colonialism is thus that 'by centralising the *territory* of Eritrea in a colonial *state* it has created in the people a sense of belonging to—and identification with—the *territory*' (emphasis added).<sup>7</sup>

While Eritrean society was deeply divided during the years of the British Military Administration when the fate of Italy's lost colonies was decided, Eritrea should eventually have received independence as the economic and social changes that took place under colonialism mirrored the colonial experiences of other African countries to do so.<sup>8</sup> However, in an international climate determined by the dawn of the Cold War the United States and its allies felt their strategic interests could only be secured if Eritrea remained linked to their then ally Ethiopia. A federation with Ethiopia in which Eritrea retained legislative, executive and judicial powers in domestic affairs was thus seen as the perfect solution.<sup>9</sup>

Ethiopia from the start violated its terms and 'stripped away the safeguards on the autonomy of Eritrea's political, social, and economic institutions'.<sup>10</sup> The annexation of

Eritrea as Ethiopia's fourteenth province in 1962 was the last step in that process. This clearly contravened the spirit and the letter of the United Nations sponsored federation, but the international community remained silent. Thus a second legacy of Italian colonialism and its aftermath which remains engrained deep inside the conscience of the Eritrean political elite is the experience of denial of *juridical statehood*, coupled with a deep disappointment in and distrust of the international community due to its failure to enforce Eritrea's rights according to the standards of international law.<sup>11</sup>

The period of Ethiopian rule over Eritrea between 1952 and 1991 is within dominant Eritrean historiography regarded as illegal,<sup>12</sup> or even as amounting to a case of African colonialism, suggesting a strong desire by the new Eritrean government to eliminate any traces of this Ethiopian legacy. Looking a bit deeper, however, many of the structures of the present Eritrean state as well as the policies pursued in many ways resemble those of Ethiopia at the time when the current generation of Eritrean leaders were more often than not students at the University of Addis Ababa. This is evident for example in the way institutions of higher education are administered, most notably Asmara University, in mobilisation policies targeting Youth in particular and more generally in the unitary and centralised administrative structures of the state.<sup>13</sup>

And while with the adoption of a new constitution Ethiopia has opted for a break with the past and—at least on paper—explicitly reduced the territorial state to the status of a confederation of peoples, the independent state of Eritrea 'appears to reproduce, within the colonial frontiers of Eritrea, a concept of . . . territory almost indistinguishable from that of both imperial and revolutionary governments in the years before 1991 in Ethiopia as a whole'.<sup>14</sup> Territorial integrity thus becomes the central pillar in Eritrea's conceptualisation of statehood. One could indeed argue that the Ethiopian constitution adopted in 1995, which gives 'every Nation, Nationality and People in Ethiopia' the right to self-determination and ultimately secession under specified conditions,<sup>15</sup> poses a direct threat to Eritrean notions of unitary government. This is in particular the case as various people of the same 'nationality' live on both sides of the border and they might prefer their own independent political entity, most prominently the Afar and Kunama. This paper is not the place to discuss those issues further, and it more generally remains to be seen how the Ethiopian state would react if indeed any of its 'nations' pursued secession.

The third layer of importance in understanding contemporary Eritrea is the time of the revolutionary struggle and the parallel society that evolved in the early-liberated base area in northern Sahel around the town of Nakfa from the late 1970s onwards. Here the then

liberation movement, the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF), who renamed as People's Front for Democracy and Justice (PFDJ) forms the present day government, put a miniature version of the state it aspired to create into practice. This 'quasi-state' was characterised by notable achievements in terms of human development under the conditions of war and scarcity, showing what people can do when driven by a sense of solidarity and common purpose and much commented on at the time.<sup>16</sup> Alternatively, and less commented on, a tightly knit society emerged based on centralised control and guidance in which any dissent was dealt with swiftly. Taken together, while 'much emphasis has been given to the social transformation of Eritrea undertaken by the EPLF ... it is important to note that it was *primarily* established to liberate Eritrea through *military* means' (emphasis added).<sup>17</sup>

A persistent legacy of this period in present day relations between the Eritrean state and its citizens can best be summed up with reference to the concept of biopolitics. Having achieved military victory and statehood against major obstacles, the post-independence political elite embarked on a social engineering project with the ultimate aim to remake Eritrean society according to its version of modernity.<sup>18</sup> Critical to the success of this project are loyalty and dedication of the collective citizenry, or what Agamben calls the politicisation of bare life as such.<sup>19</sup>

From the above two major defining historical legacies emerge that determine the Eritrean polity today. Those are one the one hand a persistent fear of losing—with tacit international assent—the territorial integrity of the Eritrean nation-state; on the other, a political system based on broad mobilisation coupled with authoritarian control. Both are deeply intertwined and transforming them will be crucial not only to finding a lasting solution to the present Eritreo-Ethiopian conflict, but as well as in determining the future viability of the Eritrean state. Therefore, they are discussed in more detail below.

### *Defining legacies: the quest for juridical statehood and the biopolitical project*

In contrast to the majority of former colonial territories that received statehood decades before Eritrea, where an 'antecedent state wittingly [forced] its inhabitants into a contrived nationhood',<sup>20</sup> Eritrea had to 'demonstrate its status as a nation before it could be granted its own state'.<sup>21</sup> In this process of 'designing' the Eritrean nation the EPLF has been highly

successful. One important root of that success was the EPLF's capability to overcome the divisions in a multi-ethnic and multi-religious society, combined with an ability to nourish pre-existing traditions in differentiating 'Eritreanness' as distinct from other identities. However, one should not overlook that the EPLF operated in the context of a revolutionary armed struggle and much of its popular legitimacy arose from its military strength. Ultimately, even though different groups of Eritreans experienced the liberation struggle differently, the common narrative of liberation and ultimate statehood is based on violence coupled with sacrifice.<sup>22</sup>

As has been said elsewhere, 'the Eritrean borders were first born out of violence [referring to Italian colonial rule], then subdued under violence [referring to the period under Ethiopian occupation], and later re-established by violence'. The use of violence was considered a valid option by the EPLF to establish Eritrea as a nation and state-to-be, as Issayas Afewerki, the current Eritrean president said in a speech delivered at the Royal Institute of International Affairs in London in 1988 'We have accepted the war, the military path, to assert ourselves as a people and a nation'.<sup>23</sup> Eritrea can thus be described as one of the 'most extraordinary examples of *war* and state formation in the modern era' (emphasis added),<sup>24</sup> where recognised sovereign statehood followed military victory.

In addition, Eritrea is a classical 'diasporic' state, a state based on 'territorial' nationalism.<sup>25</sup> Instead of promoting an ideology of historical unity and essential identity, the Eritrean discourse evokes heterogeneity and territorial origins of national identity. This identity is almost a 'total innovation' and thus 'politically fashioned ... and oriented', while its aspirations are fixed by the boundaries of the territory. Territory thus becomes of overarching importance as a symbol and myth of statehood; it marks the major difference between the nation as an 'imagined community' and the nation-state.<sup>26</sup> In the age of globalisation and considering the substantial Eritrean diaspora, this notion of nationalism may sound passé. However, Bernal has shown convincingly that for Eritreans nationalism and transnationalism 'do not oppose each other but intertwine in complex ways', with transnationalism in fact strengthening the nation-state in various ways and vice versa, as the Eritrean State has taken considerable steps to "institutionalise' transnational activities'.<sup>27</sup> With independent Eritrean statehood after an internationally recognised referendum and with the explicit consent of the Ethiopian government in 1993, questions of territory and *juridical statehood* seemed settled finally.<sup>28</sup>

One the face of it, and comparable to many other settings where liberation movements have come to power, the promise of 'development' has been 'deployed as legitimising

strategy' by the new EPLF/PFDJ-led government. What should have given pause for thought, however, was first the military legacy that in different facets continued to underpin Eritrea's development strategy and more generally the transition from nation to nation-state, the latter often being 'hierarchical, regulatory and coercive'.<sup>29</sup>

Second, uncertainty about the boundaries of the Eritrean territory was never far away. In fact, Eritrea had territorial disputes of varying severity with all its neighbours bar Ethiopia since 1993 and before 1998.<sup>30</sup> Thus, that conflict over the common border would equally erupt with Ethiopia should not have come as such a surprise. In fact, already during the liberation war there were disputes between the different liberation Fronts about where exactly the future border would be that were never resolved. Equally, the severity of the conflict has to be understood in light of the fact that Ethiopian hegemonic claims in the whole history of Eritrean nationalism have been the ultimate source of contestation.<sup>31</sup>

Having said that, however, renewed war was by no means inevitable. Its outbreak and conduct was strongly connected to the type of state Eritrea had become between 1991 and 1998, and in particular, how processes of political institutionalisation and consolidation took shape.<sup>32</sup>

### **Post-liberation Eritrea as an 'African Developmental State' (1991–1998)**

When looking at Eritrea after independence, it can be considered in many ways as a 'developmental state'. A developmental state 'has two components: one ideological, one structural'. At the structural level, it 'establishes as its principle of legitimacy its ability to promote and sustain development'. At the ideological level, the governing elite 'must be able to establish an 'ideological hegemony', so that its developmental project becomes, in a Gramscian sense, a 'hegemonic' project to which key actors in the nation adhere voluntarily'.<sup>33</sup> While it has been argued that Eritrea lacked the resources to function in real terms as a developmental state, it had the aspiration to do so. Indeed, Eritrea did achieve a considerable amount of success in terms of 'modernising development'.<sup>34</sup>

The years since Eritrean independence can thus be characterised as a state building process, which relied on a highly paternalistic political elite. This elite on the one hand advocates a propensity towards personal sacrifice to foster the common good, in line with the more general description of state formation as a cultural process, which entails the 'elaboration of ... moral frameworks for the enhancement of social cohesion'.<sup>35</sup> On the other

hand, however, the governing elite deeply mistrusts that ‘the people’ have the capability to make the ‘right’ decisions; thus, participation and individual engagement are only welcome as long as they comply with the overall blueprint of the political leadership. The PFDJ thus acts not so much as a political party, but rather as a socialising organ which, supported by the education system and the mass media, mobilises the human resources of the country for its economic, political and social progress.<sup>36</sup>

Looking at the ideological level, or at the level of ‘political imaginary’, the ultimate objective of the Front can be described as forming a synthesis between the citizens and the state, or creating a political entity where the nation and the state appear to be one. Most visible is this agenda in the mobilisation of Youth within the nationwide national service campaign that was introduced in 1994. The campaign then consisted of six months military training plus one year civilian reconstruction activities. Moreover, while the ideological underpinnings stressed predominately the latter, the military element always remained a crucial part to enable the state to respond comprehensively to a threat to its territorial integrity. As such, the national service campaign symbolises more generally the nature of the Eritrean polity as based on past legacies of securing *juridical statehood* by means of violence. And while this turn to violence might have been born from a feeling of betrayal by the international community,<sup>37</sup> this still makes Eritrea a prototypical example for Buck-Morss’ assertion that at the core of modern sovereign entities lies a blind spot or wild zone of ‘violent power’ that is ‘above the law and . . . *potentially* a terrain of terror’ (emphasis added).<sup>38</sup>

Until the outbreak of the 1998–2000 Eritreo–Ethiopian war, the potentially oppressive features of Eritrea as a ‘hard’ state were largely hidden.<sup>39</sup> The PFDJ-led government commanded significant capital of popular legitimacy, even though members of some of the country’s ethnic minorities have kept a critical distance to the state’s modernist agenda, leading at times to resentment of government schemes in particular in the western lowlands of the country.<sup>40</sup> Overall, it can be said that in spite of frustrations the majority of Eritrea’s citizens were prepared to go along with interferences into their lives as long as it helped the overall development of the country, and were ‘willing to accept government control without much resentment’.<sup>41</sup>

The war and its conduct, however, have proved to be a transformative event for the Eritrean polity. Not only could the political leadership at times not guarantee the state’s territorial integrity, but also at the same time, the thus far hidden dimension of any biopolitical project emerged: the generative challenge from within.



### *A turning point: the 1998–2000 Eritreo-Ethiopian war and its legacies*

From the often widely differing accounts about the outbreak of the 1998–2000 Eritreo-Ethiopian war, the following picture emerges. When Eritrea gained independence, its border was supposedly fixed by a series of Italian-Ethiopian colonial treaties (signed in 1900, 1902, and 1908 respectively). However, this border was never clearly demarcated and boundary-related problems soon begun to surface, in particular in three areas: Badme in the western border region, Tsorona-Zalambessa in the central border region, and Bure in the eastern border region. A system of local committees was set up by both countries to settle those disputes; in addition, they received attention at the highest level, as evident in an exchange of letters between the Eritrean President Issayas Afewerki and Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles Zenawi.<sup>42</sup>

On 6 May 1998, a small group of Eritrean soldiers entered one of the disputed areas around the hamlet of Badme, an area shown on most maps as part of Eritrea that, however, had come under Ethiopian administration after annexation in 1962.<sup>43</sup> A shoot-out with the local (Ethiopian) militia followed, causing casualties on both sides. The Eritrean reaction this time was to send large contingents of Eritrean soldiers into the area to reclaim what was regarded as Eritrean territory. The reaction of the Ethiopian government was equally firm. It declared Eritrea had launched a war of aggression against Ethiopia and made the recovery of its territory its major objective. Even though at that stage the Eritrean side appealed for negotiations, while Ethiopian media urged all-out war, there is no evidence that the extremely destructive war that followed resulted from any deliberate calculation of its potential political benefits on either side. The most plausible origin seems to be an ill-considered Eritrean reaction to provocations by local officials on the Ethiopian side of the border that escalated beyond capacity of either government to control. Eritrea occupied what it believed to be its rightful territory in unthinking confidence of Eritrean military superiority and in the belief that Ethiopia would not offer serious resistance. However, given that subsequently each side committed resources to the conflict out of all proportion to material benefits at stake, explanations for its duration and intensity can only be found in the relationship between war, the state, and nationhood on either side.<sup>44</sup>

For Eritrea, the war soon became an attack on its very existence as a state. Whereas one might rightly claim that the fighting—which in its course claimed an estimated 100,000

lives in trench warfare and Ethiopian human waves attacks<sup>45</sup>—was not fought over the particular stretches of land at Badme and the other two contested areas to which the fighting soon was to spread. It was fought for a boundary that symbolises the essence of what defines Eritrean statehood.<sup>46</sup> As Clapham notes, a sense of territoriality is deeply entrenched in each of both states; but much more so in Eritrea, which fought for its territory such a long and bitter war.

A soldier in an interview with the author during a visit to the frontline near Tsorona put it this way: ‘The land of Eritrea, that is what we are, this earth, these trees . . . if you take our land away, we cease to exist, so that is why we are here, that is what I am fighting for, that is what our martyrs died for’ (interview, 3 January 2000). For many Eritreans, the national symbol of their nationhood is the outline of the map, rather than the flag or the official national symbol, the camel. Every year on 24 May, the anniversary of Eritrean independence, shops all over the country have congratulatory messages written onto their windows, accompanied by a drawing of the Eritrean map—of which the straight line of the Badme triangle is a prominent feature.<sup>47</sup>

With hindsight, it thus does not come as such a surprise that the war flared up in the Badme area. Moreover, Badme remains a highly contentious issue to this day. The war ended when—after Ethiopia militarily gained the upper hand and occupied large chunks of Eritrean territory in the western lowlands of the country—both parties signed an Agreement on the Cessation of Hostilities, brokered by the Organisation of African Unity (OAU),<sup>48</sup> in June 2000 in Algiers. This led to the establishment of the United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE), and paved the way for the deployment of an international peace keeping force along the border as well as the establishment of a buffer zone, the Temporary Security Zone (TSZ) between the warring parties 25 km inside Eritrean territory.<sup>49</sup> In due course, an independent Boundary Commission was appointed to delimit and demarcate the contested border based on colonial treaties and applicable international law. In its ruling in April 2002, the Commission carefully avoided any concrete reference to the village of Badme and its co-ordinates—allowing both sides to claim Badme in fact was declared their territory.<sup>50</sup>

Duly, with the announcement of the verdict—which both parties had agreed beforehand would be final and binding—a propaganda war surfaced in which both sides claimed victory.<sup>51</sup> Subsequently it became clear that the Delimitation Decision had in fact found Badme to be in Eritrea, a decision that at least technically vindicated the Eritrean claim to have gone to war in defence of its territory. In addition, even though Ethiopia was

awarded major parts of other contested areas, it has since challenged the Delimitation Decision on various grounds and stalled on implementing the Commission's verdict.<sup>52</sup> Badme has acquired a 'symbolic importance entirely out of proportion',<sup>53</sup> as it represents for both sides the underlying dynamics of the war: For Ethiopia, in particular those forces inside the country who oppose Eritrean independence, it is emblematic for the loss of the whole of Eritrea and with it the loss of direct access to the sea. For Eritrea, it symbolises the threat of encroachment by Ethiopia on the country's hard-won sovereignty with the ultimate fear that Ethiopia might one day try to regain that access to the sea.<sup>54</sup>

At the time of writing, what could be called a state of 'cold peace' between the two countries has lasted for more than five years. Ethiopia, while having softened its stance from denouncing the Boundary Commission decision as 'unjust and illegal' to accepting its ruling 'in principle', still demands 'dialogue' and has failed in practice to comply with any instructions by the Boundary Commission.<sup>55</sup> In the light of those facts on the ground, Eritrea—with some reason—doubts the sincerity of Ethiopia's claim that, in fact, it does not seek to renegotiate delimitation nor impose preconditions on demarcation.<sup>56</sup> In the course of 2005, relations between UNMEE and the Eritrean government have deteriorated in various ways, resulting in, for example, a helicopter flight ban for UNMEE personnel that poses a major obstacle to its mission, and the expulsion of some UNMEE personnel. When Eritrea had accepted the TSZ and UNMEE military operations on its soil, it did so in the belief that demarcation would be carried out swiftly once the Boundary Commission had announced its verdict, bringing the dispute quickly to an end. Meanwhile, UNMEE's presence is perceived on the Eritrean side not only as 'an imposition on its sovereignty' but equally as an 'unwelcome reminder of Ethiopia's intransigence over the border'.<sup>57</sup> While thus far, peace has been preserved, with growing frustration on the Eritrean side and the lack of an effective UNMEE presence inside the TSZ it may only be a question of time before fighting flares up again.<sup>58</sup>

The stalemate between the two adversaries has become so intractable that external support will be needed to break it. While Eritrea has international law on its side in demanding boundary demarcation in accordance with the Commission's decision, this is practically impossible without Ethiopian consent. Thus, some form of dialogue—rejected by Eritrea until demarcation has gone underway—has to proceed at least in parallel with the demarcation process. The parties that urged both countries to accept arbitration and signed the December 2000 Algiers agreement as witnesses, namely the African Union (AU), the European Union (EU), the United Nations (UN), and the United States (US), are in prime position to move this process forwards, and to apply some pressure on

Ethiopia to fulfil its obligations in implementing the Commission's ruling. In particular, the US should play an important part in this process, as many of the substantive points in the Algiers agreement go back to earlier US initiatives at the outset of the conflict.<sup>59</sup> However, in the post-September 11 world order, for the US it is deemed more important to bolster Ethiopia as its most important ally in the fight against 'Islamist extremists' in the Horn, while for Britain, Ethiopia has become a test case for fighting poverty in Africa as a whole.<sup>60</sup> Eritrea, on the other hand, has squandered much of the international sympathy it enjoyed at the outset of independence through a political leadership increasingly regarded as despotic. Thus the fact that Eritrea's position is reinforced by the 'inviolability of final and binding arbitration as a fundamental tenet of international law' does not receive the prominence it should, reinforcing within the Eritrean political elite deeply held suspicions towards the international community and in particular the US as siding with Ethiopia.<sup>61</sup>

Taking all those things together, a sustainable solution to the conflict between the two neighbours seems a long way off. Nevertheless, it is worthwhile to look at the war and its implications for Eritrea as a state and its model of development, as well as in terms of its potential to break the cycles of violent conflict in the Horn.

### *After the war: ruptures within the Eritrean State*

Looked at from the Eritrean side, the most visible outcome of the war are the many ruptures within the Eritrean State it has brought about.<sup>62</sup> Those ruptures are based on a variety of developments:

First, the war with Ethiopia slowed down Eritrea's developmental successes. Not only did many social projects come to a standstill, also economically, the majority of Eritrean citizens became worse off. In addition, more than one million Eritreans, a third of the population, were temporarily displaced in the course of the war.<sup>63</sup>

Secondly, the flaws in the government's leadership style were exposed—in the way the war erupted as well as its subsequent conduct. The PFDJ lost its 'aura of invincibility' ('Unfehlbarkeit' in the original),<sup>64</sup> particularly as the war ended in military defeat for Eritrea.<sup>65</sup> The political leadership thus lost parts of its broad popular legitimacy.

What Bernal observed in relation to the diaspora Eritrean community is true in a wider sense: When the war started, the Eritrean government set up a national defence bank account and donations arrived in large numbers. They did not, as Bernal notes, flow in to

‘alleviate the suffering caused by war but were aimed at bolstering the Eritrean state’s capacity to wage war.’<sup>66</sup> If Eritrea would have won the war, the government could be sure of continued support and national service would possibly be as popular as before.

The failure to this day to secure the all-important boundaries of the Eritrean state keeps the permanent mobilisation going, a mobilisation that at the same time undermines the vision for the future of large parts of Eritrean Youth.<sup>67</sup> The war did thus not question the logic of the Eritrean polity as based on violence, nor did it question the biopolitical project in principle, it mainly showed that those entrusted with carrying it through had faltered. At the same time, the state needed to put increased demands upon society, therewith opening up the spectre of social unrest based on the more general dynamics that put legitimacy at risk ‘through the imposition of new state practices.’<sup>68</sup>

Having said that, the majority of people inside Eritrea are still reluctant to express dissent openly. Only a few prominent party members, intellectuals and journalists did so. However, for the moment, those have been silenced and put into detention without trial, a response on the part of the state that exposes what Buck-Morss calls the potential terrain of terror in modern state making. In addition, differences within the diaspora have (re)surfaced with greater intensity than ever before.<sup>69</sup>

This leads to a third factor bringing about ruptures within the Eritrean polity: the increasing importance of transnational identity for Eritrean citizens. Since independence, Eritrea has moved from being a closed off society in a remote part of the Horn of Africa to being exposed to the international global environment. At the same time, processes like the EPLF/PFDJ-led modernisation of Eritrean society coupled with the mobilisation of its citizens arouse more generally expectations and new levels of political demands. As a result, people grow ever more reluctant to follow their leaders ‘blindly’. Or, to put it differently, as Eritrea has moved from a ‘disciplinary society’ to a ‘society of control’, a society in which ‘civil society is absorbed in the state’, at the same time new forms of resistances have opened up based on ‘maximum plurality and uncontrollable singularisation.’<sup>70</sup> In addition, ideas of statehood based on the notion that a political elite in form of a vanguard party has through war-time sacrifices gained quasi ‘ownership’ of the state are simply not sustainable for an impoverished nation within a global order dominated by the United States and its allies.<sup>71</sup>

The next question to ask then is how those ruptures might help or hinder a long-term solution to the latest Eritreo-Ethiopian conflict and violent conflict in the Horn more generally.

## *What future for the Eritreo-Ethiopian relationship and the political configurations in the Horn?*

In a best-case scenario, the most important outcome of the war in terms of the relationship between Eritrea and Ethiopia would be the legal demarcation of the entire border between the two states, the importance of which goes beyond the reallocation of contested territory to either side. The acceptance of the border as outlined by the Boundary Commission, a boundary created by Italian colonial rule, would entail an end to what has been described as a 'clash of visions' about territorial and political identity between the two adversaries: Eritrea as a state is defined by the territorial legacy of Italian rule. Ethiopia is fêted for being the only black African country that withstood European colonialism, and the contested boundary serves as an 'abominable reminder of alien intrusion' to the Ethiopian state.<sup>72</sup> Adhering to this same boundary as the territorial demarcation of the two states will not necessarily change the interpretation of the past on either side, an interpretation that on the part of many Ethiopians has been characterised by the resurrection of former relations of power where Eritrean independence is seen as a threat to their national identity.<sup>73</sup> However, it can lay the foundation to allow both states to live with their different interpretations and perceptions, and concentrate (again) on the challenges of development.

Now, the chances for this to happen appear rather remote. At the time of writing and in the light of the downscaling of UNMEE's mission that has met with reservations from senior UNMEE officials, new attempts are being made to urge both countries to enter some sort of negotiation. However, the fronts remain the same as ever: Eritrea insists that the boundary is demarcated without any further negotiations, while Ethiopia wants to discuss issues of implementation of the Boundary Commission's ruling, in fact demanding revisions.<sup>74</sup> The longer this standoff continues, the worse for Eritrea, which is unlikely to be able to bear the economic consequences of the stalemate or be able to sustain the current levels of mobilisation indefinitely.<sup>75</sup>

Another outcome of the Eritreo-Ethiopian war and probably its most bitter legacy is a changed notion of citizenship. Whereas Eritrea, typical for a diasporic country, extended citizenship rights to all people of an Eritrean father or mother, no matter where they lived, this meant in practice (if not *de jure*) that many Eritrean citizens in Ethiopia had double citizenship and were, for example, eligible to vote in the Eritrean referendum for independence as well as in Ethiopian elections. Before the outbreak of the war, this was not

seen as a major problem. From the beginning of the war, Eritreans in Ethiopia became *persona non grata*. An estimated 75,000 were forcibly expelled, often under crass violations of their human rights, a policy that to a lesser extent was replicated by Eritrea in particular after the losses on the battlefield and the signing of the ceasefire agreement in June 2000. It might take generations to achieve mutual trust between the people of the two states again, in particular in light of the fact that the Claims Commission, one pillar of the Algiers peace agreement, has not been specifically empowered to review contested nationality issues.<sup>76</sup>

More broadly, for a stable peace in the whole of the Horn of Africa, the pattern of 'mutual interference'<sup>77</sup> in each other's internal affairs, which has been prevalent in the Horn for most of the past 30 years, needs to be broken. It was so briefly in the early 1990s, when the end of the Eritrean liberation war coupled with the end of the Cold War seemed to offer a window of opportunity for the whole region. It led to a brief period of *détente* between 1991 and 1994, when a new political stance could be observed on part of most governments in the region to refrain from supporting the internal opposition in neighbouring countries, and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) was revived and strengthened to include a role in peace making and the coordination of regional security policies.<sup>78</sup> In particular, the new leaders of Eritrea and Ethiopia pushed an agenda for peace and development within the region.

However, those pledges were abandoned in late 1993 when Eritrea, supported by Ethiopia and Uganda, started actively to support the Southern Sudanese opposition, in response to alleged attempts by the Sudanese government to support the Eritrean Islamic Jihad, a militant group albeit with not much following or influence in Eritrea. The Eritreo-Ethiopian war has increased these politics of destabilisation, with Eritrea allegedly supporting Oromo opposition groups in Ethiopia as well as certain Somali factions, and Ethiopia supporting and trying to create Eritrean opposition movements.

At the time of writing, a possible proxy war between the two adversaries seems on the horizon in Somalia. Ethiopia is openly supporting the 'secularist' Transitional Federal Government of Somalia temporarily based in Baidoa with military training and arms, and of late has also sent troops across the border in its aid. Eritrea for its part has reportedly sent weapons shipments to the Islamic Courts Union (recently renamed Supreme Islamic Courts Council), whose fighters had taken control of large swathes of southern Somalia, including the capital Mogadishu, by June 2006. Increasing involvement of the Ethiopian military in Somalia suits Eritrea, because it reckons that the more Ethiopian troops are drawn southwards, the farther away they are from the Eritreo-Ethiopian border.

In addition, there is hope on the Eritrean side that discontent within Ethiopian army ranks concerning the government's military strategy in Somalia might lead to more incidents like the high-profile defection in August 2006 of an Ethiopian brigadier general and about 100 of his soldiers to Eritrea. At least part of the rationale behind the Eritrean involvement in Somalia appears thus to be based on the assumption that drawing Ethiopia deeper into the Somalia quagmire will eventually force a resolution on their disputed border. This assumption seems rather fanciful given Ethiopia's military strength and the fact that in Somalia at least it is acting in line and with tacit support of the United States in its global war on terrorism.<sup>79</sup>

Ultimately, therefore, it seems only the acceptance of the verdict of the Eritrea-Ethiopia Boundary Commission by both parties, and the actual demarcation of the border, could become a new starting point for the strengthening of regional bodies like IGAD to include a political and peacemaking role. More generally, new forms of conflict resolution that do not rely on military tactic and strengths but other means of conflict management would have a chance to emerge. As an example, which was hailed as a model for conflict resolution then, the arbitration process between Eritrea and Yemen concerning the Hanish islands could serve. In this process, Eritrea could claim military victory, but complied with a ruling that declared the main islands to belong to Yemen.<sup>80</sup>

In the long-term, however, whether both parties are willing to sustain the work of the Boundary Commission in a spirit of compromise,<sup>81</sup> and in particular whether Ethiopia is prepared to lay its hegemonic ambitions within the region to rest, will be the decisive factor to determine whether prospects for the future will centre on peace and development, or the continuation of violent conflict. With the current stalemate seemingly bound to continue, what then does the future hold for the State of Eritrea?

### *Concluding remarks: prospects for the future of the State of Eritrea*

When looking at developments within the State of Eritrea since independence, the country could have become an important example for sustainable political institutionalisation and consolidation on its own terms. The PFDJ at its congress in March 1994 made some of the most comprehensive commitments to democracy and the observance of human rights of any party on the continent. There was justified hope that Eritrea could serve as an example



of a war having truly democratic results, based on innovative forms of democracy cultivated within the liberation movement. In addition, steps were taken to separate the ruling party from the government in organisational, financial and personnel terms, a process albeit full of complexities and the exact workings of the linkages between both entities were never fully revealed.<sup>82</sup>

Most crucial in terms of the institutionalisation of political rule, an independent Constitutional Commission was established which engaged in public participation in the formulation of a new Eritrean constitution.<sup>83</sup> The constitution was ratified in 1997 as the fundamental law of the State by the highest legislative body, the National Assembly. Even though in the constitution national duties are arguably given priority over individual rights, it does provide for the creation of representative democracy and the guarantee of basic human rights, including free speech, free press, freedom of movement, freedom of assembly as well as equality before the law.<sup>84</sup> For the time being, the implementation of the constitution has been suspended indefinitely—a move officially justified with the national emergency in the course of the 1998–2000 Eritreo-Ethiopian war. The war can thus be described as the event that brought domestic institutionalisation to a halt.

With hindsight, it is hard to tell whether political dynamics would have been different had that war not occurred. As it is, the Eritrean polity today is characterised by an abolition of the separation between the military and the political, a result of an absence of institutionalisation and constitutionalism that has equally been observed in other post-revolutionary African states.<sup>85</sup>

Looking at political institutionalisation in terms of foreign policy, the recourse to war with Ethiopia equally shows that the ruling party has not found a way to ‘resolve disputes through institutional mechanisms of the state’, a fact that is equally true for Ethiopia. Both countries failed to institutionalise bilateral relations, relations that were born out of the collaboration of guerrilla armies but then shifted to relations between two distinct and very different states.<sup>86</sup> Similarly, once the crisis had erupted in the form of clashes at Badme in May 1998, no institutionalised channels for communication existed to avoid the conflict getting out of hand.

Looking more generally at pathways from conflict to recovery, Addison developed a typology where Eritrea and Ethiopia are both grouped under the heading ‘national reconfiguration’.<sup>87</sup> For both countries, scenarios are envisaged where institutional investment leads towards sustainable prosperity in the future. Thus far and as long as the constitution remains suspended, Eritrean institutionalisation is based on an outdated

model of a one-party state—in fact, by 1999 Eritrea has been the only one-party state in the whole of Africa.<sup>88</sup>

Such a route and the form of direct democracy that went with it might have been feasible in the years after Eritrean independence. Eritrea until 1998 can be described as following a notion of democracy that centres on addressing not mainly political rights but equally and for the majority of poor people in African societies arguably more crucially, concrete socio-economic rights. In that respect, governance and state building in Eritrea could be seen as a quite successful counter-narrative to the global agenda of ‘good governance’ as a prerequisite for African development.<sup>89</sup>

The ruptures caused by the 1998–2000 war, however, have made this route impossible to pursue for the future without authoritarian control that is bound to become despotic and dictatorial.<sup>90</sup> As has been mentioned above, the government, once widely trusted, has lost important parts of its legitimacy based on that trust, and has to rely more and more on coercion and control, evoking Agamben’s picture of the camp as matrix of modern political space in more than symbolic ways.<sup>91</sup> This is even less sustainable in the longer term if one considers the important role the diaspora plays in financing the projects of the state,<sup>92</sup> nor when considering that the forces of modernity that were unleashed by the EPLF/PFDJ develop their own dynamics and cannot easily be subdued again under authoritarian control.

The picture is not entirely bleak, however, and there is some hope that Eritrea might step back from the brink. In contrast to other war-torn societies, a term that in many ways does not apply to Eritrea, Eritrean society is characterised by a large stock of social capital and strong bonds of social cohesion, providing it with substantial resources bound for a positive future once political institutionalisation has taken hold and the constitution is truly implemented.<sup>93</sup>

Ultimately, for Eritrea to remain a viable political and economic entity, the internal philosophy, the ‘mould’, of the PFDJ needs to be transformed and a more consultative style of government needs to emerge. This is not to argue in favour of a Western style multi-party system, but rather a process of democratisation that aims to be inclusive and accommodative.<sup>94</sup> For the time being, conventional routes to political change, in the form of an organised opposition, are blocked, as are opposing voices who articulate themselves within the ruling party. That leaves inward withdrawal or outward migration as the only ways to contest the biopolitical project, both unviable in the long run for the survival of a small state whose borders are contested by a hegemonic neighbour. In addition, without

institutionalised economic, and ultimately political, ties with Ethiopia, Eritrea's economic prospects will always remain precarious. A base for renewed mutual engagement thus needs to be found. Whether this is possible under the present autocratic leadership in both countries remains an open question at this stage.

## Acknowledgements

Thanks are due to David O'Kane for a valuable exchange of ideas on the concept of 'biopolitics'. I also wish to thank the two anonymous referees for the additional issues they raised in their comments. I took some up where it seemed feasible in the context of this paper, others I will keep in mind for future endeavours.

## Endnotes

1. Iyob, 'The Ethiopian-Eritrean conflict,' 659–682; Jacquin-Berdal, 'Introduction,' ix–xxi; Ottaway, *Africa's New Leaders*; Reid, 'Old Problems in New Conflicts,' 369–401.
2. Abbink, 'Ethiopia-Eritrea: Proxy Wars,' 407–425; Jacquin-Berdal and Plaut, *Unfinished Business*; Woodward, *The Horn of Africa*.
3. Tønnesson, 'The Layered State of Vietnam,' 236–268.
4. Jackson and Rosberg, 'Why Africa's Weak States Persist,' 1–24; see also the examples of Somaliland and Western Sahara as discussed in Adam, 'Formation and Recognition of New States,' 21–38; Shelley, *Endgame in the Western Sahara*; and White and Cliffe, 'Matching Response to Context,' 314–342.
5. Historically, different parts of what is now Eritrea were ruled by different outside powers, including Abyssinian, Ottoman and Egyptian rulers. The establishment of Italian colonial administration (1890–1941) brought Eritrea as a unified entity into existence. From 1941 until 1952, because of Italy's defeat in the course of WWII, Eritrea was under British Military Administration. In 1952, it was decided by the United Nations that Ethiopia and Eritrea should become a federation. Ethiopia dissolved that federation unilaterally in 1962 and annexed Eritrea as its fourteenth province. For further details, see Iyob, *The Eritrean Struggle for Independence*; Pateman, *Eritrea. Even the Stones are Burning*; and Sorenson, *Imagining Ethiopia*.
6. For such a discussion see Firebrace and Holland, *Never Kneel Down*; Gebremedhin, *Peasants and Nationalism in Eritrea*; Iyob, *The Eritrean Struggle*; Killion, 'The Eritrean Economy,' 91–118; *Historical Dictionary of Eritrea*; Levine, *Greater Ethiopia*; Longrigg, *A Short History of Eritrea*; Markakis, *National and Class Conflict in the Horn of Africa*; Pool, *From Guerrillas to Government*; and Trevaskis, *Eritrea. A Colony in Transition*.
7. Bereketeab, *Eritrea. The Making of a Nation 1890–1991*, 88; see also Iyob, 'The Ethiopian-Eritrean conflict,' 659–682; Sorenson, *Imagining Ethiopia*.
8. Sorenson, 'Discourses on Eritrean Nationalism and Identity,' 301–317; for a broader discussion of the issues involved see Cahsai, *Un Peuple en Marche*; Eikenberg, 'Nachkriegsentwicklungen am Horn,' 249–279; Gayim, *The Eritrean Question*; Habteselassie, *Eritrea and the United Nations and Other Essays*; and Yohannes, 'The Eritrean Question: a Colonial Case,' 643–668.
9. Imperial Ethiopian Government, *The Handbook for Ethiopia*; Permanent People's Tribunal, *The Eritrean Case*; Pool, *Eritrea: Towards Unity in Diversity*; United Nations Commission for Eritrea, *The Final Report*.
10. Iyob, *The Eritrean Struggle*, 88.
11. Habteselassie, *Eritrea and the United Nations*; Johnson and Johnson, 'Eritrea: The National Question,' 181–195.
12. See Gilkes, *Eritrea: Historiography and Mythology*, 623–628.
13. Dorman, 'Narratives of Nationalism in Eritrea,' 203–222; Dorman, 'Past the Kalashnikov,' 189–204; Müller, *The Making of Elite Women*; 'Now I am Free,' 215–229.
14. Clapham, 'Boundary and Territory in the Horn of Africa,' 242. The imperial government in Ethiopia ended with the overthrow of Emperor Haile Selassie in a coup led by Mengistu Haile Mariam in 1974. The new

- leadership, the 'Derg', aspired to carry out a Marxist revolution and remained in power until its overthrow by the Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) in 1991.
15. Bariagaber, 'The politics of cultural pluralism', 1056–1073.
  16. See, for example, Connell, *Against All Odds*; Davidson et al., *Behind the War*; Firebrace and Holland, *Never Kneel Down*; Frankland and Noble, 'A Case of National Liberation with Feminist Undertones'; Papstein, *Revolution at Dusk*; and Pateman, *Even the Stones are Burning*.
  17. Pool, *From Guerrillas to Government*, 106; for a detailed discussion of crises and dissent within the EPLF and the working of the clandestine 'vanguard party' see *ibid.*
  18. Dickinson, 'Biopolitics, Fascism, Democracy', 1–48; Müller, *The Making of Elite Women*.
  19. Agamben, *Homo Sacer*. Agamben grounds modern sovereignty in the classical Greek distinction between bare life (*zoë*) and the form of living proper to an individual or a group (*bios*), a distinction salient in the modern history of many nations; for an example of the latter see Farquhar and Zhang, 'Biopolitical Beijing', 303–327.
  20. Zelinsky, *Nation into State*, 7; in contrast to a state, whose existence depends on *empirical* and *juridical* statehood as discussed above, being a nation is regarded here as a form of 'social consciousness, and the nation is only born when enough people ... believe in its existence', see *ibid.*, 6.
  21. Hoyle, 'The Eritrean National Identity', 384; see also Taddia, 'Post-Twentieth-Century Eritrea', 7–29, on Eritrea as a state beyond the postcolonial state. Another prime example is the state of Israel and indeed, many similarities do exist between those two polities.
  22. Ofuho, 'Discourses on Liberation'; Pool, *From Guerrillas to Government*.
  23. Both quotes from Tronvoll, 'Borders of Violence', 1044.
  24. Clapham, 'War and State Formation', 9.
  25. Iyob, 'The Ethiopian-Eritrean Conflict', 659–682; and Smith, *Theories of Nationalism*, 217.
  26. Smith, *Theories of Nationalism*, 219; see also Anderson, *Imagined Communities*; and Sorenson, 'Discourses on Eritrean Nationalism', 301–317.
  27. Al-Ali et al., 'The Limits to "Transnationalism"', 585; and Bernal, 'Eritrea Goes Global', 3. 'Transnationalism' is defined here as the processes by which immigrants sustain social and political relations that link their societies of origin and settlement over time and across national borders; for further discussion see Basch et al., *Nations Unbound*; Portes et al., 'The study of transnationalism', 217–237; and Sorenson and Matsuoka, 'Phantom Wars and Cyberwars', 37–63.
  28. After the fall of the Derg in 1991, the EPRDF took power in Ethiopia while the EPLF proclaimed a two-year transitional period which culminated in a referendum on independence in April 1993; see Peters, *Das Gebietsreferendum in Völkerrecht*, for further discussion.
  29. Makki, 'Nationalism, State Formation and the Public Sphere', 475, 491. The Eritrean experience here is not so different from what we have seen in other settings where liberation movements became governments in terms of the political culture that evolved. To discuss such comparisons in more detail is beyond this article, but see for example, Melber, 'From Liberation Movements to Governments', 161–172.
  30. See Müller, 'Towards Understanding', for a detailed discussion.
  31. Iyob, 'The Ethiopian-Eritrean conflict', 659–682; Trivelli, 'Divided histories', 257–289; Tronvoll, 'Borders of Violence', 1037–1060; and Young, 'The Tigray and Eritrean Peoples Liberation Fronts', 105–120.
  32. Institutionalization and consolidation are two different things: institutionalization refers to the establishment of domestically and internationally recognized state structures, and includes issues such as rules of political succession and rules of diplomacy. Consolidation refers to the process by which the majority of the population comes to support the political project of the newly governing elite and make it their vision for the future; see Selbin, *Modern Latin American Revolutions*.
  33. Castells, 'Four Asian Tigers', 55; and Mkandawire, 'Thinking about Developmental States', 290.
  34. Bernal, 'Eritrea Goes Global', 3–25; Connell, 'Eritrea: Starting from Scratch', 29–39; Fengler, *Politische Reformhemmnisse*; Luckham, 'Radical Soldiers', 238–269; World Bank, *Eritrea: Options and Strategies for Growth*.
  35. Makki, 'Nationalism', 482.
  36. Hirt, *Eritrea zwischen Krieg und Frieden*; Luckham, 'Radical Soldiers', 238–269.
  37. It is hard to entangle myth from reality here. Eritreans like to picture themselves as innocent victims of geopolitical dynamics, a view used strategically by the present political leadership. This notion has recently been reinforced by a contemporary history of Eritrea (subtitled: 'How the World Betrayed a Small African Nation') written by a British journalist who regularly features as 'Eritrea-expert' on the BBC, see Wrong, *I Didn't Do It For You*. Not only is this notion not very helpful in understanding the underlying dynamics behind the Eritrean polity, it also, rather un-historically, ignores the Janus-faced nature of power; see Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*.
  38. Buck-Morss, *Dreamworld and Catastrophe*, 4.

39. See Forrest, 'The Quest for State Hardness', 423–442.
40. For further discussion see Naty, 'Environment, Society and the State', 569–597.
41. Ottaway, *Africa's New Leaders*, 62; see also Luckham, 'Radical Soldiers', 238–269. This propensity to sacrifice own aspirations for the common good could be observed in many different ways. Those include for example the initial enthusiasm for the national service campaign—for the second round of recruitment 30,000 Youth had registered, even though the training centre could only accommodate a maximum number of 20,000 at a time, see UNICEF, *Eritrea: Frontlines of a Different Struggle*; or a willingness by many university graduates to forgo a lucrative career abroad in order to develop their country, see Müller, 'Now I am Free', 215–229.
42. This exchange took place in July and August 1997. The author has copies of two letters written by Issayas Afewerki and one response letter written by Meles Zenawi. Extracts from those three letters can also be found in the appendix section of Negash and Tronvoll, *Brothers at War*, 115–116. For a comprehensive overview of the dynamics behind the war, see also Gilkes and Plaut, *War in the Horn*; Jacquin-Berdal and Plaut, *Unfinished Business*.
43. In October 1997, Ethiopia produced a new map, which shows the borders of the northern Ethiopian region of Tigray altered at various locations, including around the Badme region, which is firmly marked as Ethiopian territory. In due course, Ethiopian troops occupied several villages in the area and replaced the Eritrean administration.
44. See Clapham, 'War and State Formation'; Negash and Tronvoll, *Brothers at War*; Sorenson and Matsuoka, 'Phantom Wars and Cyberwars'. Some observers see economic reasons as the major force behind the war. And indeed Eritrea's growing economic independence from Ethiopia, which reached new heights when the former adopted an independent new currency, the Nakfa, in 1997, triggered economic tensions between the two states, as did the fact that with Eritrean independence Ethiopia had become a landlocked country. But those tensions should not have led to a war which, even if considerably more so for Eritrea, has proved detrimental to economic development on both sides; for further discussion see Negash and Tronvoll, *Brothers at War*, 30–45; and Styant, 'Twisting Ethio-Eritrean economic ties', 177–200.
45. Human Rights Watch, *Eritrea & Ethiopia*; Milkias, 'Ethiopia and Eritrea at War', 33–71.
46. During the course of the war, fighting took place in short but extensive cycles of military confrontation, alternated with periods of lull in which only occasional skirmishes took place. The last bout of fighting occurred in May 2000, when Ethiopia launched an attack that reached deep into uncontested Eritrean territory; for further details see Human Rights Watch, *Eritrea & Ethiopia*; and Jacquin-Berdal and Plaut, *Unfinished Business*.
47. See also Hoyle, 'The Eritrean National Identity', for a discussion of the importance of the map as a national and state symbol; she describes the map as 'the visible, even tangible, product of [the] thirty year struggle', *ibid.*, 410.
48. In July 2002, the OAU was replaced by the African Union (AU).
49. The June 2000 Cessation of Hostilities Agreement led to the establishment of the UNMEE as adopted by Security Council Resolution 1312 (2000) on 31 July 2000. The Council in due course authorized up to 4200 troops including up to 220 military observers for UNMEE in September 2000 (Security Council Resolution 1320 (2000) on 15 September). By late October 2000 UNMEE military observers took positions along both sides of the disputed border, and on 18 April 2001 UNMEE declared the establishment of the TSZ, an action that marked the formal separation of the parties' military forces. On 12 December 2000, the governments of Ethiopia and Eritrea signed a comprehensive peace agreement in Algiers in which both sides committed themselves to the full implementation of the Agreement on Cessation of Hostilities and to terminate permanently military hostilities between themselves. The three key issues addressed were delimitation (establishing the course of the border on maps by reference to treaties and other evidence) and demarcation (physical identification of the border on the ground by laying marker stones and similar means) of the border; compensation; and investigations into the origins of the conflict. The agreement thus provided for the establishment of (a) a Boundary Commission; (b) a Claims Commission mandated to decide on all claims of loss, damage or injury from either side; and (c) a commission to conduct an independent and impartial investigation into the origins of the conflict, see <http://www.unmeeonline.org>, accessed 2 June 2006, copy on file.
50. Eritrea-Ethiopia Boundary Commission, *Decision*.
51. Agence France Press (17 April 2002) 'Badme at Centre of Eritrea-Ethiopia War of Words', copy on file; British Broadcasting Corporation (16 April 2002) 'Analysis: Horn Border Town Still Disputed', copy on file; UN-Integrated Regional Information Network (23 May 2002) 'Eritrea-Ethiopia: Sides Called to The Hague for Border Talks', copy on file.
52. Associated Press (28 March 2003) 'Boundary Commission Rules Key Border Town in Eritrea', copy on file;

- International Crisis Group, *Ethiopia and Eritrea: Preventing War*; see also <http://www.un.org/NewLinks/ebcarbitration/>, accessed 2 June 2006.
53. International Crisis Group, *Preventing War*, 2.
  54. International Crisis Group, *Ethiopia and Eritrea: War or Peace?*
  55. Agence France Press (30 October 2003) 'Setback for Peace As Ethio-Eritrea Border Demarcation Delayed Again', copy on file; Reuters (24 September 2003) 'Ethiopia Asks UN to Help Solve Eritrea Border Row', copy on file; Reuters (12 May 2004) 'Ethiopia Urges Talks to End Dispute With Eritrea', copy on file; UN-Integrated Regional Information Network (3 October 2003) 'UN Tells Ethiopia to Implement Border Ruling', copy on file.
  56. Scholars are divided on the Boundary Commission's ruling, which in particular in traditionally pro-Ethiopian circles is regarded as deeply flawed, see for example Clapham, 'Notes on the Ethio-Eritrean Boundary Demarcation' and Gilkes, 'Violence and Identity'. However flawed the ruling may be, it is consistent with the terms of reference for the Commission that both parties had agreed upon at the time—those terms specifically do not include delimitation based primarily upon military facts on the ground or desires of local communities, see also International Crisis Group, *Preventing War*.
  57. International Crisis Group, *Preventing War*, 8; see also England and Turner, 'Eritrea and Ethiopia sliding into war', *Financial Times*, (24 October 2005); and Reuters (4 October 2005) 'Eritrea Tells UN to Stop Overflights Now', copy on file.
  58. Until 31 May 2006, the UN Security Council had continuously extended UNMEE's mandate (SC/RES/1344, 15 March 2001 to SC/RES/1678, 15 May 2006, which extended UNMEE's mandate until 31 May). In addition, SC/RES/1430 was passed on 14 August 2002, by which the Council decided to adjust the mandate of UNMEE in order to assist in the implementation of the Delimitation Decision; and SC/RES/1640 was passed on 23 November 2005 in which the Council deplored Eritrea's imposition of restrictions on the freedom of movement of UNMEE and demanded that Ethiopia accept fully and without delay the binding Delimitation Decision. On 31 May the Council with SC/RES/1681 (2006), while extending the mission's mandate for another four months until 30 September 2006, for the first time reduced its numbers to a maximum of 2300 troops, see <http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko/missions/unmee/resolutions.html>, accessed 2 June 2006. This move shows the exasperation of the UN with the enduring stalemate and aims to concentrate minds, while demarcation teams are being recruited to ensure progress is being made before the current mandate expires in September.
  59. From the outset of the war, the US played a key role in mediation, visible, for example, in the (failed) US-Rwanda Peace Plan of 4 June 1998 and in behind the scenes diplomacy aimed at bolstering OAU conflict resolution endeavours, see Negash and Tronvoll, *Brothers at War*, 53–83; Prendergast and Roessler, 'The Role of the United States'; the text of many of those proposals are reprinted in the appendices in Negash and Tronvoll. As a reason why those early proposals failed to prevent all-out war a 'misreading of the dynamics between Eritrea and Ethiopia' has been made out, a misreading that has ultimately led to 'the hardening of stances of the antagonists' visible to this day, see Iyob, *Re-Configuring Identities*, 6.
  60. Power and Interest News Report (PINR). 'Washington's Long War and Its Strategy in the Horn of Africa' (9 November 2005), copy on file; *The Economist*, 'Backing the Favourite. Ethiopia Defies an International Ruling and Its Western Allies Do Nothing' (29 October 2005): 48. Ethiopian Prime Minister, Meles Zenawi, was a member of Tony Blair's 'Commission for Africa'.
  61. International Crisis Group, *Preventing War*, 14; see also Hedru, 'Eritrea: Transition to Dictatorship', 435–444; *The Economist*, 'Backing the favourite', 48.
  62. Similar ruptures, albeit based on different dynamics, have occurred in Ethiopia, most visible in political unrest within the ruling party and growing support for political opposition movements. Both have been met with at times violent crackdown and a curtailment of civil and political liberties—to discuss those in detail is beyond this article, but see Abbink, 'Discomfiture of democracy?', 173–199.
  63. For details see ERREC, *When Civilians Become Targets*; ERREC, *The Betrayed*; Hirt, *Eritrea zwischen Krieg und Frieden*; Negash and Tronvoll, *Brothers at War*; Plaut, 'The conflict and its aftermath'; and Styan, 'Twisting Ethio-Eritrean Economic Ties'.
  64. Hirt, *Eritrea zwischen Krieg und Frieden*, 121.
  65. In Eritrea's official discourse, the end of the military phase of the war is not interpreted as a military defeat, but in fact a victory over Ethiopian aggression. While it is true that Eritrea in the course of this new war lived through the threat of being overrun by an enemy army with an apparently infinite supply of soldiers, and that at some point in the military campaign the Ethiopian command (though this was never official Ethiopian government policy) openly spoke about marching onto Asmara and changing the Eritrean leadership (see J.-L. Péninou, 'Ein Grenzkrieg wird zur Strafaktion', *Le Monde*

- Diplomatique*, July 2000), it is hard to see (also for many Eritreans) how one can claim victory in the face of an official Eritrean casualty figure of 19,000 men and women and Ethiopian troops having occupied large parts of Eritrean territory.
66. Bernal, 'Eritrea Goes Global', 3.
  67. This is particularly the case in the recent political climate, where since the 1998–2000 war with Ethiopia started, people who are called for National Service are not allowed back after the required 18 months, but are made to stay in service indefinitely, until the war situation is fully resolved—in fact making National Service a 'permanent condition' for the nation's Youth, see also Dorman, 'Past the Kalashnikov'. At the same time, National Service obligations are enforced with a rigour not seen before: Having started on an irregular basis in 2000 mainly in Asmara, the authorities have meanwhile mounted a nation-wide campaign to identify men and women who did not fulfil their service obligations. National service recruits are either stationed along the border outside the TSZ, or involved in reconstruction activities.
  68. Krasner, 'Approaches to the State', 238.
  69. For details see Al-Ali, et al., 'The Limits to Transnationalism', 578–600; Amnesty International, *Eritrea: Arbitrary Detention of Government Critics*; Jayasekera, 'Under Cover of Elsewhere', 100–111; Müller, *The Making of Elite Women*; Plaut, 'Briefing: The Birth of the Eritrean Reform Movement', 119–124; and Reporters Sans Frontiers, www.rsfo.org, accessed 3 June 2006.
  70. Hardt and Negri, *Empire*; see also Abrahamsen, *Disciplining Democracy*; De Sola Pool, *Contemporary Political Science*.
  71. Clapham, 'Eritrean Independence', 115–129.
  72. Iyob, *Re-Configuring Identities*, 21.
  73. Sorenson and Matsuoka, 'Phantom Wars and Cyberwars', 37–63.
  74. Agence France Press (1 June 2006) 'Eritrea, Ethiopia Trade Blame for UN Force Reduction', copy on file; Reuters (2 June 2006) 'Eritrea calls UN peacekeepers scaledown unjust', copy on file; www.unmeeonline.org, accessed 3 June 2006.
  75. Eritrea, which has a total population of about four million, had an estimated 320,000 troops mobilized in 2005 of which 200,000 were regulars and 120,000 reserves, see International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance 2005–2006*. For a more general discussion see International Crisis Group, *Preventing War*.
  76. Human Rights Watch, *The Horn of Africa War*; Legese, *The Uprooted*; *The Uprooted Part Two*; *The Uprooted Part Three*; Negash and Tronvoll, *Brothers at War*.
  77. Cliffe, 'Regional Dimensions', 89.
  78. The IGAD—formerly known as Intergovernmental Agency on Drought and Development (IGADD)—includes the following countries: Ethiopia, Eritrea, Sudan, Somalia, Djibouti, Kenya and Uganda.
  79. 2006. *Africa Confidential* 47(16), 3–4; Associated Press (10 August 2006) 'Over 150 Ethiopian troops defect to rival Eritrea', copy on file; Cliffe, 'Regional Dimensions'; Iyob, *Re-Configuring Identities*; Klein, 'The Horn of Turbulence'; Negash and Tronvoll, *Brothers at War*; *The Economist* 'The path to ruin. A region endangered by Islamists, guns and its own swelling population' (10 August 2006).
  80. In late 1995, tensions between Eritrea and Yemen over the Hanish Islands (situated between the two states, whose territorial status was never clarified after the fall of the Ottoman Empire) culminated in military confrontation and occupation of a number of islands by Eritrean troops. In 1996, both parties agreed to an international court of arbitration. The court handed down its awards (in two stages) in October 1998 and December 1999 respectively, see Antunes, 'The 1999 Eritrea-Yemen Maritime Delimitation Award' and Johnson, 'Permanent Court of Arbitration'.
  81. Neethling, 'Keeping the peace', 56–64.
  82. Christmann, 'Machterhalt oder Demokratie', 16–26; EPLF, *A National Charter for Eritrea*; Fengler, *Politische Reformhemmnisse*; Harbeson, 'Rethinking Democratic Transitions', 39–55; and Riley, *The Democratic Transition*.
  83. The Constitutional Commission of Eritrea (CCE) was established in 1994 with members representing all sections of Eritrean society. The Commission's mandate was to draft a constitution based on 'a wide-ranging and all-embracing national debate and education through public seminars and lecture series on constitutional principles and practices', see CCE, *Draft Constitution*, 1.
  84. Ibid.; see also Christmann, 'Machterhalt oder Demokratie', 16–26; Habteselassie, 'Creating a Constitution', 164–174; Iyob, *The Eritrean Struggle*; and Luckham, 'Radical Soldiers', 238–269.
  85. The best example is probably Algeria see Roberts, *The Battlefield*; see also the discussion in Shelley, *Endgame in the Western Sahara*.
  86. International Crisis Group, *War or Peace*, 3; see also Prendergast, *US Leadership in Resolving African Conflict*.
  87. Addison, *From Conflict to Recovery*, 27.
  88. Thomson, *An Introduction to African Politics*, 230.
  89. Abrahamsen, *Disciplining Democracy*; see also Müller, 'Responding to the HIV/AIDS epidemic', 199–212.
  90. This shift from democratic centralism with a genuinely democratic component to merely 'responding to



government dictates' finds its most concrete expression in the presidential office at the core of executive power. Not only is Issayas Afewerki President, Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces, Chairman of the National Assembly and Secretary General of the PFDJ; he also commands wide ranging powers of appointment (including ministers, provincial governors, high court judges and ambassadors). In addition, the presidential office, including the Office for Macropolicy attached to it, is the ultimate decision making body, often sidelining the relevant ministries and through its own directives undercutting ministerial authority, see Tronvoll, 'The Process of Nation-Building', 482; but also Christmann, 'Machterhalt oder Demokratie'; Hirt, *Eritrea zwischen Krieg und Frieden*; Luckham, 'Radical Soldiers'; and Pool, *From Guerrillas to Government*.

91. Agamben, *Homo Sacer*; see also Müller, 'The State and Globalisation'.
92. IMF, *IMF Country Report 03/165*; Styan, 'Twisting Ethiopian Economic Ties'.
93. Hansson, 'Building New States'; Kibreab, 'Displaced Communities'; Müller, 'Responding to the HIV/AIDS Epidemic'.
94. See Joseph, 'Africa: States in Crisis', 159–170.

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